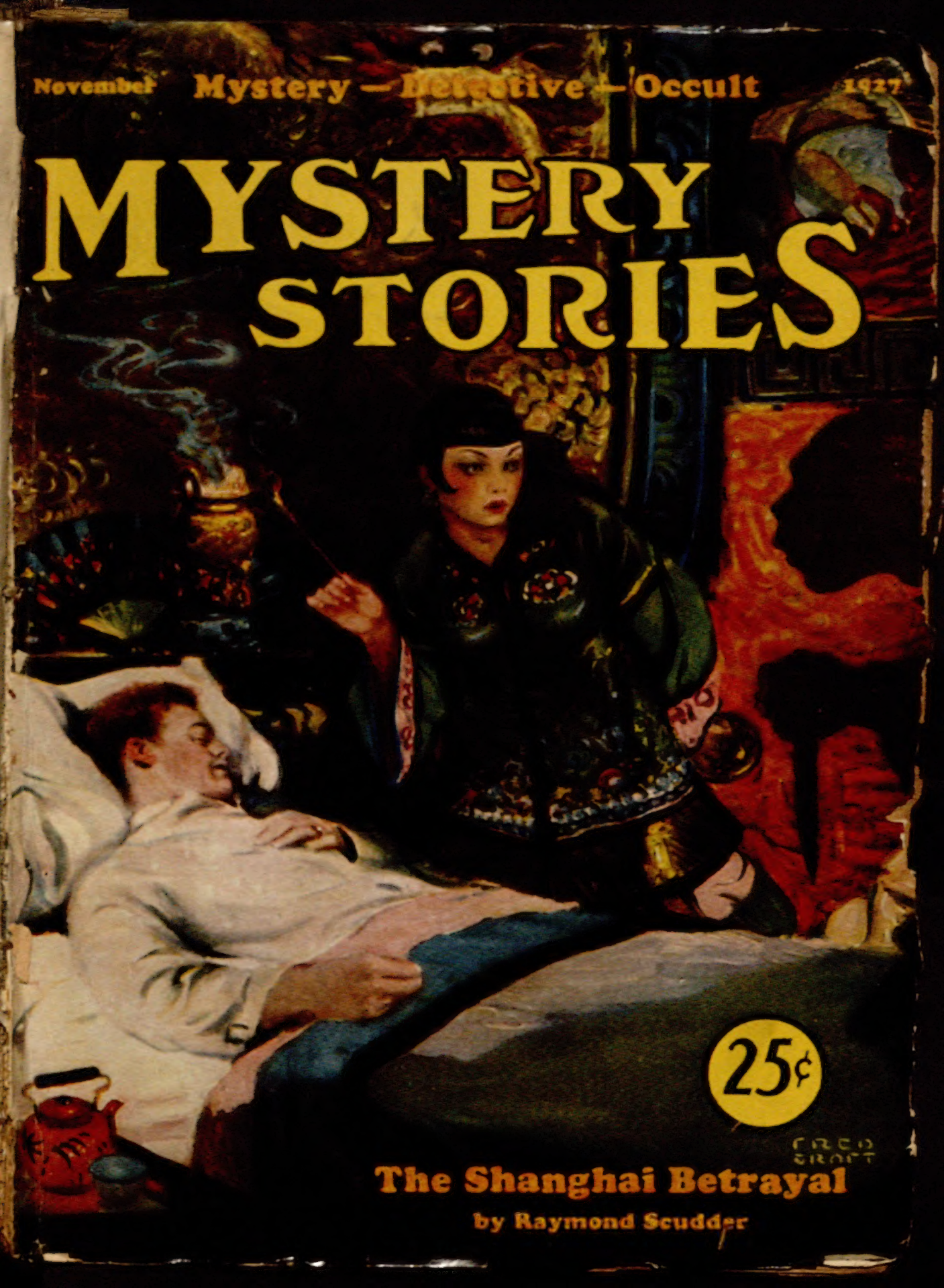
November Mystery — Detective — Occult 1927

MYSTERY STORIES



25¢

FRED CRAFT

The Shanghai Betrayal

by Raymond Scudder

$2 brings your Electric Priscilla!

Send only $2.00 and we will immediately ship you a brand-new Electric Priscilla Sewing Machine *direct from the factory*, freight prepaid. When it arrives, use it for 10 days *in your own home*. Sew on it as much as you wish. *Subject it to every test you can think of*. If not *perfectly* satisfied, ship it back freight collect, and we will refund your $2.00 at once. But if you are convinced that the New Priscilla is the best machine you ever used, keep it and pay for it on this easy basis: $2.00 at the end of 10 days and $5.00 a month for 10 months—only $54.00 in all.

The Electric Priscilla is the machine you want if you have electricity in your home. Light weight. Easily carried from place to place. Does every kind of sewing just the same as a foot power machine. No pedaling. A sturdy little motor does all the work. A slight pressure of your foot starts or stops the machine, and regulates the speed.

Life-time Guarantee

The New Priscilla is a quality machine throughout—Beautiful *Quartered Oak* Woodwork — Glossy *Black Enameled* Ironwork—and a *Life-time Guarantee* that protects you.

All Latest Improvements

Lightest-running machine you ever saw—perfect stitching—makes sewing a pleasure—delighted owners everywhere—Tools, Big Box of Attachments and Instruction Books FREE. Here's your chance to try one of the best machines made—a machine you will be proud to own, without a bit of risk. Send your name and address with $2.00 NOW—to

THE PRISCILLA COMPANY,
470 Atlantic Ave. Boston, Mass.

Beautiful Quartered Oak foot-power machine — same price — same terms — send $2.00 for 10 days' Free Trial.

CONTENTS

COVER DESIGN (Illustrating THE SHANGHAI BETRAYAL).....FRED CRAFT
THE SHANGHAI BETRAYAL (Complete Novelette).....RAYMOND SCUDDER 133
Adventure runs rife in fantastic China
RAWHIDE REESE (Short Story).....PAUL SAND 167
A thrilling Western of unusual calibre
SURVIVAL OF THE FITTEST.....ANONYMOUS 178
COMMUNION (Short Story).....LOUISE PLATT HAUCK 179
A young man finds peace and understanding and a partial fulfillment of his dreams
LONG SHADOWS (Serial—Part I).....KATHARINE HAVILAND TAYLOR 193
Terror and weirdness blend on a moonless night
A CLOAK TO MURDER.....ROBERT W. SNEDDON 210
SIGNAL CLEVERNESS (Short Story).....WARREN ORDWAY 211
In which the radio plays a prominent rôle
THE SPY MASTER—A Most Derisive Mercy (Series).....RICHARD WILMER ROWAN 225
Deals with espionage in its most fascinating manifestations.
COLD POISON.....ALFRED F. HORNER 239
FAMOUS UNSOLVED MYSTERIES—The Affair at 31 Bond Street (Series)
ALVIN F. HARLOW 240
Contains all the known facts regarding one of the most baffling murder cases in history.
THE MAN WHO LOOKED BACK (Short Story).....LESLIE MCFARLANE 249
A criminal whose forte was self-vindication plans an escape from retributive justice
THE CLEVERNESS OF THE BARON DE CITTABOLA (Short Story)
Filled with unique situations and priceless humor MURRAY LEINSTER 259
HOW AIX-LA-CHAPELLE WAS FOUNDED.....ARTHUR F. HARRIS 272
WHEN CONSCIENCE STINGS (Short Story).....WALTER W. LIGGETT 273
A tale of the Alaskan wilds and a man who was yellow
THE MOST MYSTERIOUS HAPPENING OF MY LIFE—A Ghostly Visitant
An episode introducing a new department JOHN MILLER GREGORY 281
THE MYSTERY CLUB (Department).....THE EDITOR 283
The first meeting of a new club which is not only interesting but mysterious
WE TELL OUR READERS.....THE EDITOR 286

Subscription Price: In United States and Possessions $3.00 per year; single copy 25 cents. Canada $3.50 per year; foreign $4.00.

Published monthly by The Priscilla Company, publication office 52 Vanderbilt Avenue, New York City. Entered as second-class matter December 24, 1925, at the Post Office at New York, N. Y., under the Act of March 3, 1879. Trade Mark Registered.

(Copyright, 1927, by The Priscilla Company.)

Manuscripts must be accompanied by sufficient postage for return. The publishers disclaim all responsibility for loss of unsolicited manuscripts. Address all communications to the Editor, 52 Vanderbilt Avenue, New York City.

MONEY-MAKING OPPORTUNITIES

TAILORING SALESMEN make real money selling Davis virgin wool, made-to-measure suits. Low-priced, perfect-fitting, guaranteed. Beautiful fabrics. New merchandising plan doubles sales. Liberal bonuses, cash prizes. Write now. P. H. Davis Tailoring Co., Station 30, Cincinnati, Ohio.

Photo Medallion Agents Earn $20 Daily. Easy work collecting photos. Capital or experience unnecessary. Give you 4-day service on beautiful photo reproductions. Write Pudlin, Dept. 116, 259 Bowery, New York.

No Matter What You Are Selling, spare or full time, you can make big, easy, extra daily profits. Every man a customer for Motortex—the new heavy, warm, all wool tailored, dressy, serviceable suit. Worth $35.00. Sells at $19.95. Pays you $3.00 and $4.00 commissions. 37 features. Spotproof and dirtproof. No competition. Write for free outfit. Harrison Bros. Dept. 558, 133 W. 21st St., New York.

Agents—$13.50 Daily (in advance) Spare time will do; introduce 12 months' guaranteed hosiery; 57 styles, 39 colors, for men, women, children. "Silk to the Top" ladies' hose—men's fancies. No capital or experience needed. We furnish samples. Silk hose for your own use free. New Plan. Macochee Hosiery Co., Road 92811, Cincinnati, Ohio.

Agents—90c An Hour Earned Advertising and distributing samples to consumer. Write quick for territory and particulars. American Products Co., 9465 Monmouth, Cincinnati, O.

500 Men Wanted to earn $90 Weekly. Wonderful new line men's suits. Amazing values $9.95 up. Rizaldi averages $4 hourly. We train you. No experience or capital needed. Write Comer Mfg. Co., Dept. TS-4, Dayton, Ohio.

Agents: Amazing new 3-in-1 lingerie combination for women making sensational hit. $15.00 daily easy. Spare or full time. Free Outfit. French Fashion Company, Dept. R-100, 9 North Franklin, Chicago, Ill.

Make $100 weekly selling better-quality all-wool made-to-measure suits and overcoats. Highest commissions. Extra bonus for producers. Large swatch samples free. W. Z. Gibson, Inc., 157 W. Harrison, Chicago.

Salesmen: Write Your Name and Address on postal and mail to us. We'll show you sure earnings of $20 a day. Will you risk one minute and a one cent stamp against $20? Mind you, we say we'll show you. Address Salesmanager, 850 W. Adams, Dept. 619, Chicago.

EARN $87-$110 WEEKLY SELLING CHRISTMAS CARDS. Full or spare time. $10 sample book FREE. Weekly payment. Experience unnecessary. We co-operate. John Hertel Co., 320 Washington, Chicago, Ill.

WANT $500? Sell Beautiful Dresses, Coats, Scarfs, Sweaters. Amazing low prices. We deliver. Exp. unnecessary. Complete outfit free! Write Hershey Knitting Mills, 2001 South California Avenue, Chicago.

MAKE BIG MONEY HANDING OUT MYSTIC "ZIPPO" Red Hot 50c Household Seller! New Amazing Discovery! Quick Demonstration Brings Immediate Cash Profits for Agents! Write "ZIPPO" Co., Fort Wayne, Ind.

Sensational New Adjustable Cap fits everybody. Sells at sight. Make $50 to $75 weekly writing orders. Commissions in advance. Complete outfit Free. Fits-U Cap Co., Dept. M-105, Cincinnati, Ohio.

I Will Pay You $2 An Hour to take orders for Carlton dresses and coats. Women in every home, store, factory and office eager to save a third on our stunning Paris styles. Everything supplied Free but only applications stating territory, experience and references will be considered. Carlton, Inc., 206 South Wabash, Dept. 332-B, Chicago.

New lines just out. Everything in hosiery, underwear and Rayon lingerie for men, women, children. Beautiful, irresistible Catalog and Samples now ready. New special big money plans. Cash bonus, service awards, rapid promotion. No capital needed. Choice territories going. Rush reply to World's Star Knitting Co., 789 Lake St., Bay City, Mich.

Follow a Straight-Line —and WIN!

Do you need more money to enjoy Life? Would you like to own your own home? When do you think you'll buy that new automobile?

If you really want to succeed, you must try. This may be your lucky day. Find the right opportunities and enjoy prosperity.

You don't need experience. You don't need capital. You can even hold your regular job, doing this pleasant work in spare time.

But you must get started sometime. If you want to succeed, choose the companies that appeal to you. Please don't write unless you mean business.

To the Public: These firms offer you merchandise values and a convenient service that you cannot duplicate elsewhere.

To Manufacturers: For advertising rates, address Publishers Classified Service, 9 East 46th St., New York.

Own your own business. Inexperienced workers, spare time or full time, build profitable business with our new plan. Show marvelous line of actual shoes, Men's, women's and children's. Also durable silk hosiery. We start you by furnishing $40 sample outfit. Patented measurement system insures perfect fit. Every day pay day. If you want a permanent business, send for free book "Getting Ahead." Write now. Tanners Shoe Manufacturing Co., 1111 C Street, Boston, Mass.

Windows washed in 60 seconds without pail, sponge or brush. A fast $1.25 seller. 90% profit. Agents make $70-$110 weekly. Easy work. Write Wonder Washer, Dept. BM-3, 33 East 10th St., New York.

Pay Day Every Day! Every Man can use a new suit or overcoat. You can make big money selling All Wool New York tailored styles priced at $19.75, $24.75, $29.75, $34.75. Leatherette cases with all wool patterns and actual photographs free. Write today. Harrison Bros., Dept. 558, 133 W. 21st St., New York.

$100 WEEKLY REPRESENTING LARGE SHIRT company—direct to wearer—wonderful opportunity for financial independence, big commissions—easy to take orders—we start you with a sales-compelling outfit free. Write at once. Supreme Shirt Co., Desk M106, 276 Fifth Ave., New York.

America's Greatest Tailoring Line Free! 150 large Swatch Samples—All Wool—Tailored to Order—Union Made—Sensational low prices. Get outfit at once. Address Dept. 234, Goodwear, 844 W. Adams, Chicago.

$20 daily easy selling amazing rain-proof caps. Made-to-measure. Finest fabrics, gold styles. Big advance profits. Free outfits and free cap offer. Taylor Cap Manufacturers, Dept. B-51, Cincinnati, Ohio.

$100 WEEKLY IN ADVANCE. NEW Line $50.00 Tweed Suits $24.00. Genuine All Virgin Wool. Fit guaranteed. Nothing like them in America. Big samples free. Manager, 44 North Ada, Chicago, Ill.

Big Steady Earnings. $35-$100 Weekly assured reliable energetic men and women selling famous Watkins Products. Millions of users everywhere. Write for our surprising new plan. Watkins, C8-3, Winona, Minn.

Agents, distributors—over 150% profit selling Auto Tow Line—strongest, lightest on market. Retails $2.00. Sample $1 postpaid. Less in quantities. Special offer and amazing new selling plan FREE. Wilman Co., Dept. N-68, Toledo, Ohio.

FREE! To honest men over 18! New patented cigarette lighter. Show your friends and make $90 weekly. Send 25c to cover mailing costs and mention name of this magazine. E. Z. Lighter, Dept. 2-G, 15 Westminster Road, Brooklyn, N. Y.

Earn $50 weekly taking orders for charming Fashion Frocks for women and children. Factory prices. Advance commissions. No experience necessary. Fashion Frocks, Inc., Dept. J-100, Cincinnati, Ohio.

Free Book Showing Hundreds Best Sellers from all parts of world, at Wholesale Prices; Agents making $100 weekly. Sponn Importing Co., Lemoyne Center, Minn.

Large Manufacturer Wants Agents to sell, to wearer, world's greatest shirt values. Experience unnecessary. Big commissions paid daily. $100 weekly. Extra bonuses and profit-sharing. Samples free. Carlton Mills, 114 Fifth Ave., Dept. 348-S, New York.

Christmas Novelty. Every Store, office and home a prospect. Sold day or evening. Plan now to make $25.00 daily, upward, during December. Cash sales—no order taking. Sample and literature Free. Consolidated, 65-Z Van Buren, Chicago.

BIG PAY EVERY DAY! Complete guaranteed line direct to wearer. Dress Shirts, Work Shirts, Flannels, Overalls, Pants, Leather Coats, Sweaters, Playsuits. $10-$25 daily! Experience unnecessary. Big Outfit FREE! Nimrod Co., Dept. 58, 4922-28 Lincoln Ave., Chicago.

New Vest Pocket Adding Machine selling like wildfire. Hundreds of agents making $18.00 a day. Write or wire for samples and territory. M. Cleary, Reliable Adding Machine Co., 170 W. Washington St., Chicago. (Not an ordinary offer.)

MONEY-MAKING OPPORTUNITIES

YOUR SUCCESS

We Start You Without a Dollar, Soaps, Extracts, Perfumes, Toilet Goods, experience unnecessary. Carnation Company, Dept. 593, St. Louis, Mo.

AGENTS MAKE $3.00 HOUR TAKING orders for 40 fascinating "Handy Things for Kitchen. Sell on sight! Write General Prod. Co., Dept. SM-3, Newark, N. J.

Extra Pants Free With $15.00 Suits. Up-to-date Patterns. Agents make $3.00 in advance. Write Free Samples. Universal Tailors, 640 Broadway, New York.

75 miles on 1 gallon. New moisture humidifier and Gas Saver. All cars. Agents wanted everywhere. 400% Profits. 1 Free to introduce. Crinchlow, A-274, Wheaton, Ill.

Cap Salesmen—Write for Big Money-Making proposition calling on retail stores. The L. B. Cap Company, 504-506-508 Byrnsmore Street, Cincinnati, Ohio.

Bankrupt and Rummage Sales. Make $50 daily. We start you, furnishing everything. Permanent business. Free details. Distributors, Dept. 279, 429 W. Superior, Chicago.

Women Representatives Wanted. New invention prevents shoulder straps slipping. No more discomfort. Women adore it. Write for particulars, free offer. Lingerie "V" Company, 5 Lake St., North Windham, Conn.

Current Ideas Magazine. How to Make Ideas Popular. Scientific articles. At your newsdealer or send 25c stamps or coin. Current Ideas, 420 Lexington, New York.

Make $25.00 daily selling colored Raincoats and Slickers. Red, Blue, Green, etc. $7.95. Hat Free. Commissions daily. Outfit Free. Elliot Bradley, 341 Van Buren, Dept. 10-AF, Chicago, Illinois.

Men—join hundreds others making $20 daily with famous Nogar $12.50 suits. Tremendous advertising support. Astounding wear demonstration makes quick sales certain. Free kit. Write today. Nogar Clothing Mfg. Co., 41 Fourth St., Reading, Pa.

Send 25 Cents for a $1.00 Pocket Cigar Lighter and learn how to make $10.00 a day. Easy. Sells on sight. Particulars FREE. Rapid Manufacturing Co., 799D Broadway, New York.

Will you wear a pair of genuine tailor-made shoes at my expense? Will you show them to your friends and take their orders? I will ALSO send you FREE, one big selling Outfit showing 70 shoe styles and 60 actual leather samples. I pay my agents $8.00 daily. Write today. Tailor-Made Shoe System, 932 Wrightwood, Dept. 10-A, Chicago, Ill.

Great neckwear line now free! Features finest quality neckwear at factory prices. Collect big commissions daily. Write for FREE tie offer and FREE outfit. Nawco Neckwear, Dept. 11-S, Covington, Ky.

Salesmen—Just Out. $9.85 for Men's suits; commission $3 in advance; free selling kit. The 808 Company, Dept. 7, Fort Wayne, Ind.

KNOWLEDGE IS POWER!

Learn While You Earn!

Electricity Made Amazingly Easy! Learn in 12 weeks on actual Electrical Machinery in great School of Coyne. Not by correspondence. No books—no lessons. Employment service for life after graduation. Get the facts. Send for big free book today. Coyne Electrical School, Dept. S7-75, 500 North Paulina St., Chicago, Ill.

$15 for Photoplay Plots. Stories revised, copyrighted, marketed. Estab. 1917. Booklet free. Universal Scenario Co., 209 Western & Santa Monica Bldg., Hollywood, Calif.

Steamship Positions—Men—Women. Good pay. See the world Free. Experience unnecessary. Send self addressed envelope for list. Drawer 122, Mount Vernon, N. Y.

Men, get Forest Ranger Job; $125-$200 month. Home furnished; hunt, fish, trap on side; permanent, no strikes or shut-downs; full pay vacations. For details, write Norton, 270 McMann Bldg., Denver, Colo.

All Men—Women, 18-50. Wanting to qualify for Forest Ranger, Ry. Mail Clerk, Special Agent, and other Govt. Positions $140-$250 month, write Mr. Ozment, Dept. 137, St. Louis, Mo.

Be a Hotel Hostess. Opportunities Everywhere, fashionable hotels, clubs, apartments. Fascinating profession; previous experience unnecessary. Simplified home-study plan qualifies you for well-paid position. We put you in touch with positions. Write today. Lewis Hotel Training Schools, Sta. AM-W601, Washington, D.C.

$1154-$2225 month. Railway Postal Clerks. Steady work; men 18 up. 25 coached free. Common education sufficient. Write immediately. Franklin Institute, Dept. P-91, Rochester, N.Y.

HIGH-SALARIED POSITIONS waiting for you in automobile, tractor and airplane work. I'll train you in eight short weeks so you can earn $45.00 to $75.00 a week — unlimited future for good men. Qualify as an expert and own your own garage or service station. Write me TODAY for big FREE AUTO BOOK. Your Railroad fare included in this big special offer. The opportunity of a lifetime — don't miss it by delay. J. H. Mulvaney, The Auto Man. Address, X-300—654 E. McMillan, Cincinnati, or X-300—1815 E. 24th St., Cleveland, Ohio. Please mention this magazine.

The greatest book on money making stunts that has ever been published will be mailed to you if you will send us 15c in cash or stamps. There are over 50 up-to-date workable plans. Address SPARETIME MONEY MAKING, 230 Fifth Avenue, New York City.

U. S. Govt. wants men, $1,900-$2,700 at start. Railway Postal Clerk exams coming. Our former government examiner prepares you for this and other branches. Free booklet. Dept. 269, Patterson School, Rochester, N. Y.

Earn $25 Weekly. Spare Time. Writing for Newspapers, Magazines; exp. unnecessary. Copyright Book "How to Write for Pay" Free! 1207 Press Syndicate, St. Louis, Mo.

New Free Book "Modern Salesmanship." Shows you quick, easy way to make big money selling. Inexperienced men soon become big producers, experienced men double and treble sales. Free Employment service. Write, no obligation. National Salesmen's Tr. Assn., N. S. T. A. Bldg., Dept. 6, Chicago.

Again in This Issue **MYSTERY STORIES** *Offers a Service to readers*

¶ Realizing that one of the problems of the home is the matter of money, we offer to our readers a service, MONEY MAKING OPPORTUNITIES.

¶ Each month we present to you a page or more of these little advertisements, some of which may mean big opportunities for you or your friends. Tell them about it.

¶ Many of these companies are million dollar corporations. Some of them are struggling inventors. But all of them, so far as we know, are trustworthy. In case you have any questions as to a firm's reliability or should you be looking for a selling connection not to be found here, write to the Publishers' Classified Service, 9 East 46th Street, N. Y. They will help you. Please enclose a two-cent stamp if a reply is desired.

And Next Month---

WE'VE selected some extraordinarily good material for the December MYSTERY STORIES. We won't give you a complete list, for we might want to make one or two changes; but we will tell you about some of the most interesting features you can look forward to.

Did you ever see Houdini? You surely know of the marvelous feats for which he was famous, and which no one could explain. Sir Arthur Conan Doyle, the illustrious author of the SHERLOCK HOLMES stories, which have set the pace for mystery-detective stories the world over, has written for us HOUDINI THE ENIGMA, in which he has turned his penetrating deductive powers to the solving of the mysterious ability of the picturesque magician and—as Sir Arthur calls him—medium-baiter. Sir Arthur believes that Houdini performed his magic tricks by means of a mystic power of dematerialization, and that the magician was, in reality, a medium. We're curious to know what your reaction to this theory will be.

When it comes to rip-roaring action and clever climaxes, Richard Howell Watkins has certainly turned the trick in his complete novelette, IT TAKES A THIEF. This is an intriguing story which moves at so breathless a pace that you will find it hard to wait for the last page in order to discover how the plot works out.

After you've read the first part of LONG SHADOWS, which appears in this issue, you'll be glad to know that this latest story by Katharine Haviland Taylor will mount to still more tense situations in the next generous instalment.

In the SIEGE OF THE DARK CHATEAU, Richard Wilmer Rowan will give us another fascinating episode from the thrilling adventures of Conrad von Karl, THE SPY MASTER.

Alvin F. Harlow will continue his series of FAMOUS UNSOLVED MYSTERIES with the poignant tale of THE LOST DAUPHIN. And under the able leadership of the mysterious Everard Jason we'll all attend the second interesting meeting of THE MYSTERY CLUB.

Besides these splendid features we're going to run a number of fine short stories—to wit:

FIND THE WOMAN *by Ellis Parker Butler*
THE DARK BROTHER *by Frances Bragg Middleton*
THE RETURN OF SIBELLA *by Sylvia Stevenson*
THE GETAWAY *by James T. Nelligan*
THE MYSTERY BANDIT *by R. A. Bankson*
THIS RIGHT AND WRONG BUSINESS *by Vera Haines*

—and other corking tales.

THE EDITOR

The American leaped up from his chair and stood tensely ready for any emergency.

The Shanghai Betrayal

A COMPLETE NOVELETTE

By RAYMOND SCUDDER

Howard Wolfton had a craving for excitement till he found it—till he ran up against the result of twenty years of dreaming. A mad dream, it was, and a stupendous plan, threatening menace to the whole of the civilized world. Wolfton wondered desperately how his fellow men could be saved—and then he received the none-too-reassuring answer.

CHAPTER I

A LAYER OF TINS

THE steamship *Florence Dollar*, returning to Shanghai from its usual run up the Yangtse-kiang through the Gorges, settled slowly against the dock.

On the promenade deck, forward and a little apart from the other passengers, stood an American whose expensive clothes and somewhat careless manner of wearing them marked him at once as a tourist—a well-to-do business man on a holiday.

Though he was probably not more

than thirty-six, a relaxation of the shoulders, which stooped forward, suggesting more a defeat at the hands of *ennui* than at those of troubled labors, gave him the appearance of a man several years older.

Leaning his weight against the railing, he shifted his balance impatiently from one leg to the other and gazed, with a more condescending than genuine interest, at the jostling crowds on the pier. It was obvious that he was bored not only with himself but with his leisure and with the very passage of time.

THERE was good reason for this. Travel had tricked Howard Wolfton. It had let him down. He was a disillusioned man. Desperately in need of excitement, his three months of seeking for it since sailing from San Francisco had brought him only boredom.

The spring of the year had exposed a new restlessness in China, which had every promise of growing into genuine excitement, rebellion, war.

Secretly, without hinting his imaginings to any one, Wolfton had conjured up in his mind all sorts of wild adventures filled with precarious situations in which he would get himself involved. He would cast away, at least for a time, that drabness which his life had assumed as its daily dress. He would become restimulated and emerge from his lethargy.

For a month he had whole-heartedly exposed himself to the night life of the "Paris of the Orient," Shanghai, expecting great results. But, alas, the city had proved almost as placid and equally as well organized as Palo Alto, his home town, or any other respectable city. Even the night clubs had closing hours, and the bandits on the Yangtse river were too gentlemanly. Try as he might, he had been quite unsuccessful in his quest for excitement. He hadn't been able, by insult or invitation, to get a living soul to shoot at him.

He now stood, defeated, at the end of his final effort to get into trouble. It was more than exasperating. In two days the *President Pierce* would take him back to the States unappeased, annoyed by an unpleasant sense of being somewhat of a fool.

The gangplank was now being made fast, and already passengers were beginning to debark. No porter being handy, Wolfton picked up his single dressing-case, the one he had fully expected to have stolen on his adventure up the great river, and made his way slowly along the deck.

SUDDENLY his attention was arrested by the sound of a familiar voice, courteous, vaguely musical, requesting in English, with the least trace of a European accent, that the young man next him give him a hand with his suitcase.

Wolfton turned in time to see the Britisher who had been addressed, a handsome young Tommy in uniform, apologize in an embarrassed manner for being unable to help. Looking at him more carefully, the American noticed that the Britisher's right sleeve hung loosely by his side, empty, and that beside him was his own suitcase, which he was about to pick up. The European, understanding what he had done, became very apologetic and looked about for some other helping hand. He was a man well into middle age, easily distinguished by a limp caused by some serious injury to his left leg. Wolfton had noticed him several times on board, and had chatted

with him once on various topics of general interest. He remembered him particularly since he obviously possessed expert knowledge of aëronautics and an up-to-date acquaintance with developments in airship designing. In their casual chat the European had not explained his business, though Wolfton had told him somewhat about his own and about his war experiences. The older man was an individual who, having once been noticed, was not soon forgotten. A beard gray and black, closely cropped, covered his cheeks and terminated in an abrupt point at the chin. His eyes, more gray than blue, though of no definite color, were quietly defiant: they did not offend, but they warned that their possessor was a man whose geniality was extended only to those who minded their own business. Whatever cordiality lay in them, one felt, was only tentative. His name, Wolfton remembered, was T. Alexander Domeric, as extraordinary a name as he had ever heard.

THE natural gesture under the circumstances was to offer to carry the European's bag. At the moment it did not occur to Wolfton as peculiar that Domeric's Chinese servant, who up to this time had been constantly with his master, was nowhere about to take charge of the luggage. Wolfton picked up the case. The older man bowed with true courtliness, expressed his gratitude quickly but eloquently, and started down the gangway, laboriously shifting his right leg in front of his left.

Detained by the crowding ahead of other passengers, Wolfton lost track of the European by the time he reached the foot of the gangplank, and had only an idea of the direction he had taken. He paused a moment to regain his hold on the suitcase, which he found particularly heavy, and was about to start off in a more hurried pursuit of its owner when he was stopped by a British officer in the uniform of a customs inspector.

"A mere formality," the officer was saying as he reached for Wolfton's bags. "The coolie will open them for you."

A little irritably the American surrendered the valises to the coolie, who fell to undoing them rapidly. In a moment the customs officer had stamped Wolfton's with a small blue label, passing it, and was about to do the same to Domeric's when his hands, digging a little deeper, struck something which aroused his curiosity. He tossed aside a rug and a cushion and disclosed, in the bottom half of the suitcase, a layer of small square tins about the size of two cigarette packages set one upon the other. Immediately his brows went up in astonishment. He threw a severe, questioning glance at Wolfton, who stood impatiently by, and, rising, came over to him.

In a low, firm voice he asked: "Surely you know what this will mean to you? It is a cardinal offense not only against local but also against international law, and I must say that for me, a man of your race, if not of your nationality, the situation is extremely embarrassing. Things like this are what make the white man lose 'face' in the Orient. Come, let us get into the office as quickly as possible."

FOR a moment Wolfton could not speak. His astonishment, when he finally began to protest, made him all but inarticulate. He had not the remotest notion of what it was all about.

He tried to offer some explana-

tion: "Don't you see? This is not my bag at all. I merely carried it down for a lame gentleman who has gone on ahead of me." And sensing something extremely ugly in the predicament, and thinking immediately of how he should most readily extricate himself, Wolfton started off abruptly in the direction in which Domeric had disappeared. But he had not moved more than a few steps when the officer had him firmly by the arm.

"I truly do not wish to become unpleasant," the Britisher said, "but you must realize that this is a very serious matter and that your place, at least for the time being, is strictly beside me. I must ask you to stand here without another move unless you wish me to subject you to more rigid restrictions."

He touched the leather case on his hip, from which Wolfton saw protruding the handle of an automatic.

Wolfton glared at the officer. His inability to resist made him doubly angry. But he managed to collect himself sufficiently to say: "If you will send an officer in that direction" —he pointed toward the gate which he felt certain Domeric had chosen —"you will . . . Wait! There he is now—the man with the lame leg. He is the owner of this bag."

Perceiving that he might have made a rather imprudent error, the customs officer changed the imperviously severe tone of his voice to one somewhat apologetic, and sent a subordinate after the lame man.

CHAPTER II

CONFUSION

PRESENTLY a limping gait was heard in the hallway of the customs office. Although Wolfton was still in a quandary, unable to make head or tail of what was happening, and unable also to make the officer reply to his questions, he felt somewhat reassured at the sound of Domeric's voice.

"You wish to see me, gentlemen?" the European inquired with the utmost civility. A powerful force seemed to occupy the room as he entered. It was apparent that his personality had immediately dominated those of the officers.

The customs official cleared his throat.

"This gentleman assures us," he said, inclining his head toward Wolfton, "that this bag, which unfortunately has neither initials nor tag by which it might be identified, and which he personally carried off the ship, belongs not to himself but to you. And we have asked you to come in this connection."

The officer was standing beside a counter upon which was the suitcase laid open with the tins revealed. Domeric walked closer. His manner was that of a man condescending out of sheer courtesy. He opened his eyes wider than one might in normal surprise when he saw what was in the case. Then he appeared to be entirely perplexed. From all that an observer might have discovered by looking at the man, the bag was one he had never seen before.

He paused, as if turning something over in his mind, before addressing the officers.

"I don't in any way begrudge you the time you have already taken—I am in a great hurry to keep an appointment," he said quietly, "and I am sure you will detain me no longer when I say that I have never seen this bag, know nothing about it whatever, and really am at a loss to know why you should choose me, out of all the passengers, to question. I trust you will not mind

if I take my leave immediately."

His low bow at this time appeared more grotesque than necessary. One could not help thinking of a circus crier—"Ladies and gentlemen"—or of a vaudeville "artist" after the accomplishment of a somewhat difficult feat.

BUT the officer was not so easily set aside.

"This is truly a most awkward situation. But it must be plain to you that it is necessary for me to detain you both until the ownership of the article is settled." Something in the eyes of Domeric made him add: "I am indeed sorry about this."

The European continued, unruffled, and as though he had not ceased talking: "You will be so kind as to detain me no longer since I am an entirely free party, and since, in so far as the case is concerned, you have no legal or other right over my free course. I might remind you that you have offered no explanation whatever as to why the valise is under such a premium for ownership. And I must instruct you, since you seem to be in total ignorance of it, that, as I am not an obscure individual but a well known member of the Municipal Council of Shanghai, the proper place for any supposedly necessary investigation is not here in this office, but there in mine, where I shall be in a very few minutes, providing you gentlemen are considerate enough to allow me to keep my engagement with Judge Foster."

The announcements brought out in this fashion by a gentleman whose appearance was after all imposing, and whose manner and language indicated him to be a person of consequence, had precisely the effect upon the officer which the speaker had expected it to have. He fell back, figuratively, and let Domeric walk upon him. The European had paralyzed this small officialdom into insignificance. But the same forces which made the officer feel his lack of importance made him also doubly anxious to exercise every bit of authority he might without actually stepping outside his lawful capacity. He insisted that Domeric would have to identify himself and produce his own baggage, since he had none with him, for inspection.

A light none too comfortable to look at appeared in the eyes of T. Alexander Domeric when this ultimatum was issued. He accepted it casually enough otherwise, but no one looking into his eyes would have doubted for a moment that he was deeply incensed. But he said no more in protest and gave the official directions as to how he might find his Chinese servant, Kwong, near the outer gate with his luggage. The European produced personal papers which indicated him to be what he had maintained, and since his baggage, which was found to be stamped with the blue labels, contained nothing at all questionable, he was told, with some apology, that he might go.

WOLFTON began to realize what an ugly complexion the arrest, with the departure of the European, was assuming. It occurred to him that he might, by appealing quietly to Domeric, touch some spring of humanity in him which, if it did not make him repent of what he was doing, would at least make him say some good word for him that would help.

Implacable gray eyes looked back into Wolfton's in answer. The American heard what sounded to him like the voice of a man utterly heartless say, quite coolly, quite

calmly: "It is very apparent that you have confused me with some one else. I was scarcely out of my stateroom during the trip. There was a large passenger list, and, indeed, I cannot remember having seen you at any time before entering this office a few minutes ago."

He turned to his servant.

"Boy," he asked, "you see this man before?"

"No, master," the coolie answered promptly; "me no see-ee before."

Without further words T. Alexander Domeric turned abruptly on his good leg and ponderously left the room, followed by Kwong, who carried his three pieces of luggage.

WOLFTON, as they went, stood looking blankly after them, for about this Kwong there was something which puzzled him so completely that it transported him for a moment from the immediate difficulty back to an incident of the evening before. Standing on deck outside Domeric's cabin, Wolfton had overheard a few words which had made him wonder, in a vague way, what sort of Chinese servant the lame man had; for in very distinct and cultured English, with very little accent, a Chinese voice had been reading passages from what seemed to be a book of political or social history. Standing now in the customs office, Wolfton wondered in a far more definite way what sort of Chinese servant the lame man had. For the voice he had heard reading was identical with that of this seemingly unschooled coolie who had just said "Me no see-ee before," the voice which had called Domeric master. The paradoxical picture of the truly intelligent face, the alert young body in coolie jacket and trousers, puzzled the American. And the pidgin English and the good English would next have engaged Wolfton had he not been brought forcefully back to his immediate predicament by the sharp voice of the customs officer.

"Come, Mr. Wolfton," he was saying, "we must be starting along."

"Starting along where?" the American asked in surprise.

"You realize, of course, that you are under arrest, and that it will be necessary to put you into custody," the Britisher was saying. "The less fuss you make, the better off you will be in the end."

A flood of protest burst from Wolfton's lips.

"I am an American citizen. I am under the protection of the American Consul. I have a right to call upon him for protection."

"In all that you are quite right. For the time being, however, you are under the control of the customs department of the Municipality of Shanghai, and you will have to come with us whether you are willing to or not. Later your case will come up before the American Consulate for disposition."

WHILE Wolfton argued, the officer led him to the gate. There he summoned a Sikh sergeant, a giant from India wearing a tightly wound turban on his head, whom he ordered to conduct the American to the Central Police Station of Foochow Road.

It was plain to Wolfton that further argument would be only a waste of breath, but when he saw the patrol wagon standing near by, with the door flung open to receive him, he made one more attempt to save himself from what he considered a disgrace.

"If you do find it necessary to hold me," he said to the officer, "at least grant me the ordinary courtesy

of allowing me to be taken to my hotel, where I have already made reservations. At the Palace you may have as many guards outside my rooms as you wish. But for Heaven's sake let me go and bathe and make myself respectable! And be great-hearted enough to let me hire a cab to ride in instead of that thing there"—pointing to the police patrol.

The officer held back for a moment. He knew that there was a thousandth chance that he was mistaken about this whole affair, and he decided that, since it really did not make a great deal of difference where the man was under guard, he would be lenient in this respect. He knew that any courtesy shown now would serve him well later on if he were mistaken in arresting the American. So, giving the Sikh sergeant further instructions about placing guards over the prisoner, he dismissed them.

CHAPTER III

A STRANGE LETTER

FOUR hours later, having shaved and bathed, and eaten dinner, which had been served to him in his rooms, Wolfton sat gazing out of the big front window which gave him a very good view of the Bund, the Public Garden, and the bend of the Whangpoo River.

A liberal *cumshah* of three Mexican dollars had convinced the Sikh sergeant that the American was not a dangerous man, but rather one to be respected, and he had offered to stand guard outside rather than inside the door of the room, as he had been instructed to do.

In the room now there was the utmost quiet. Wolfton could hear his own breathing and the ticking of his watch in his pocket.

But suddenly there intruded upon the silence a sound which made him sit up abruptly. It was like that of a door being opened or a window pushed down. He turned around quickly in his chair.

IT WAS not the sound alone which had attracted him. Some sixth sense, heritage of war experiences or of the life of primitive forebears, which could, perhaps electrically, detect the proximity of another human being, warned him. The main door, which led out into the hallway, was closed, as it had been for the past hour or more. The door to the bedroom was ajar, just as it had been when he returned to the sitting-room after dressing. Only one other door remained—that of the bathroom, but his memory for sound assured him that the slight scraping he had just heard distinctly was in no way similar to the sound the bathroom door would normally make.

Getting up, he went and looked quickly into the bathroom. He laughed at himself for his nervousness, closed the door again, and returned to his chair before the window. But he had been there only a moment when he heard the sound again, slightly louder this time, and more like the rasping of a window being pushed up. Almost directly after this he heard what he knew distinctly to be the sound of the bathroom door opening, and he turned around just in time to see, entering the sitting-room through that door a Chinaman dressed in coolie jacket and trousers.

Wolfton recognized the face immediately. It was that of Kwong, the perplexing, somewhat mysterious servant of T. Alexander Domeric. Involuntarily the American ejaculated:

"Well—what the devil——"

KWONG stood silently in front of him for a moment without offering any explanation for his sudden appearance. But as Wolfton began a fusillade of questionings and exclamations of astonishment the Chinese, with a quick, animal-like movement, reached his side in a few steps and put his hand forcibly over the American's mouth.

"I come help you," the coolie said rapidly in a low voice. His pidgin English seemed natural enough at this time. Still keeping one hand over Wolfton's mouth, he held out an envelope with the other, saying: "This from master."

On the envelope were the typewritten words:

HOWARD WOLFTON, ESQ., Hotel Palace.

Kwong, having put the paper into the proper hands, fell away from Wolfton in an apologetic manner and said, as he pointed toward the main door, leading to the hallway:

"Police! Sikhs! More better you no make noise."

It was a situation which might have been ludicrous had it not contained an element of tense seriousness. Wolfton wondered a moment what he should do. He could see no good reason for having the coolie ejected before finding out what the letter contained. He tore it open hurriedly without saying anything further, and read:

My dear Mr. Wolfton:

I cannot express to you how deeply I regret that you have suffered all this inconvenience on my account. I assure you that you have helped me, however, out of something which might have cost me my life, and I am extremely grateful to you.

If you will let my servant lead you to me, I shall be only too glad to make what compensation I can in hospitality or in any other way that you may desire for all the trouble and chagrin I have forced upon you.

Do not waste any time. You have no way of knowing it, but you are surrounded by the most imminent danger. Each minute that you delay in the hotel, your chance of escaping from something more unpleasant than I care to suggest is lessened.

Of course, you are not yet aware that you have been made the mark of a gang which is powerful and vicious in ways I cannot explain in this short message. I shall say only that, at the docks this afternoon, you did not at any time come in contact with any official customs officer. . . .

You need have no misgivings whatever as to your safety in the hands of Kwong. He is reliable and as well acquainted with the back thoroughfares of Shanghai as any coolie in the city. He will lead you directly to me.

I am, dear sir, yours most respectfully,

T. ALEXANDER DONERIC.

The entire letter, even to the signature, was typewritten.

WOLFTON had scarcely finished reading it when suddenly he saw Kwong slip quickly and noiselessly into the bedroom, closing the door behind him. The American was on the point of calling out to him to come back when he heard a tapping at the hall door. He realized that the Chinese had heard the approaching footsteps even before he had.

Putting the letter and envelope quickly into his pocket, Wolfton rose and went to the door. Opening it, he admitted the Sikh guard, who stood silently at the threshold.

"I have been instructed to tell you, *sahib*," the Indian said in the very good English common to his caste, "that, since the suit-case which you carried from the ship has given clues to numerous mysterious crimes which the police have been unable to trace in the past few months, you are to be removed from the hotel within an hour—that is, *sahib*, to a more secure place."

The Indian stood by, patiently, apparently assuming that even this service should be rewarded with *cumshah*, but withdrew and closed

the door when the American made no move to offer him anything.

CHAPTER IV

DOWN A BLIND ALLEY

TWENTY minutes later Howard Wolfton found himself walking rapidly along a dimly lighted side street. Ahead of him, five paces, walked Kwong, guiding him.

Sufficiently removed from the actual physical nervousness which had made him tremble foolishly as he clambered down over a fire-escape and two roofs adjoining the Hotel Palace, he was now able to look back over the fantastic past half-hour and wonder if he had made the right decision. Certainly he had been forced to decide quickly and definitely. Had he stayed a few minutes longer he would have been in the hands of some one, official or otherwise, whose intention was to cart him away to jail on theoretical grounds. He could not decide whether it would be worse to be in the hands of such partial officials or to be in the hands of a gang such as T. Alexander Domeric had insinuated that they were. But whether he had made the correct choice or not, this method, he believed, would at least give him a fighting chance to reach the American Consulate if that seemed necessary.

In any event, he decided, he was not going to trust any one at all in the minutest respect. This he swore to himself vehemently.

PERHAPS it was the fact of his swearing it that brought him up suddenly with the realization that at that moment he was placing a childish confidence, first, in the message of a man about whom he knew nothing whatever except that he had already been the cause of a lot of trouble, and, secondly, in a mysterious Chinese coolie who had twice aroused an unexplained distrust. He wondered suddenly why he had not seen the danger before. Probably, he decided, it was because he had been so possessed by the notion that once outside of the hotel he would be free. That and more. For there was, inexplicably, a strange attraction which, in spite of all he might do to banish it, drew him powerfully toward the writer of the letter. He recalled suddenly how Domeric's eyes had pierced him, had gone deep, and how they had struck in him some chord of sympathy which he could not forget or deny.

As he puzzled over this strange attraction to a man who inspired him with an elusive fear as well as with confidence, he decided abruptly that the explanation was *power*—some strange, rare power. More than that, it was, absurd as it seemed, some diabolical power in Domeric that was attracting him. For indeed, now that he thought of it more carefully, there *was* a sinister force in Domeric—something which fed, whether he cared to admit it or not, the hunger that had grown in him over the period of years for adventure, for excitement, for danger.

A moment before he had been half contemplating a dash for liberty away from Kwong. Now he followed with as much interest as he might have had if his heart had been set upon the mad experience for years.

They had now come out on upper Foochow Road, after passing through a series of small side streets by means of which Kwong had managed to circle, at a considerable distance, the Central Police Station. For Kwong knew that by this time the American would be questioning the sanity of

following an unknown coolie through the dark streets of Shanghai, and that, if the path lay through Foochow Road, the most lively and brilliant of all Shanghai streets, visited from all parts of China by the richer classes of Chinese seeking a good time, there would be less likelihood of having to resort to the severe methods which he was prepared to employ if the American tried to make a getaway.

EXCITEMENT made Wolfton walk faster. There were so many sounds about him—the cries of the 'rik'sha pullers, the greetings called out across the crowded street from one gay merchant to another, the invitations of pretty sing-song girls in balconies to passers-by to come up and pay for their dinners—so many various sounds that Wolfton did not distinguish a cry from behind him, which had come from the lips of one of two well-dressed Chinese, seemingly strollers, who were about five paces in the rear. But he was amazed at what seemed to him a mysterious, unnatural sense in Kwong. For Wolfton had no sooner quickened his pace, than he saw the coolie quicken his own so that constantly the same distance was kept between them, even though the coolie did not turn his head a fraction of an inch toward the American. For experiment, Wolfton advanced his pace still another degree. This time he thought he detected the quality of some voice half-remembered, perhaps out of his subconscious mind, which uttered from behind something monosyllabic which might have been a greeting or an order.

The American looked quickly back of him. All he saw was the crowded pavement swarming with jovial-expressioned, well-fed Chinese, who strolled indolently along, swinging their large, closed fans, laughing and shouting out for sheer gaiety. He decided that he was being made a fool of by his own nervousness.

HE was not well enough acquainted with Shanghai to know exactly where he was being led, but he knew definitely, as soon as they crossed the Boulevard des deux Republiques, that they were about to enter the old, native city of Shanghai.

Up to this time the course of the guide had seemed to lead in the general direction of the French Concession, and this had seemed very natural to the American. The French Concession would be the logical place, it seemed to him, for T. Alexander Domeric to have his residence. But now that they were entering the Chinese city, Wolfton's sense of comparative security was shaken. He had made no attempt all this while to communicate with the coolie, first because he believed that to do so would arouse the suspicions of any chance observer, and secondly because he presumed that he could not, on account of language difficulties, have a very satisfactory conversation with the man under any circumstances.

They were now well within the Chinese city. If Wolfton did not feel more secure in his new surroundings, he at least felt farther removed from whatever official or other power had been responsible for locking him up like a criminal and putting him under guard. But aside from what he felt as to safety or danger, he was becoming fascinated by the mysterious quality of the experience, which was growing, minute by minute, more prominent.

THEN suddenly something curious happened in Wolfton's mind. Perhaps it was the oppressive silence of the completely quiet and deserted

street into which they had just turned that made him fear abruptly that he was being duped, that he was mad to follow the coolie a step further. Perhaps it was because he had sensed that he and Kwong were not the only ones who had made this crazy tour into the dark, crooked alleys that he turned suddenly and discovered that two of the strollers he had noticed in Foochow Road were following him into the native city. They were at that very moment walking a few paces behind him.

Whatever the cause, panic suddenly took complete possession of him. He could not control his nervousness. He looked hastily from side to side for a possible road of escape.

The street now appeared to be more in the nature of an alley whose boundary was of the solid walls of houses without windows. And yet some twenty yards ahead there appeared to be a break in the wall. From this distance Wolfton was unable to decide whether it was an opening to another alley or the gateway to a courtyard, but he immediately decided to make use of it, whatever it might be.

He peered ahead of him, inclining his head slightly in the direction of the fissure, now some fifteen yards away, trying to determine its nature. Just then, from behind him, came a voice which he at once recognized as similar to the one he had previously heard calling out in a muffled tone some monosyllabic direction. His mind, however, did not in any way connect the two strollers behind him with the coolie ahead.

KWONG was by this time almost opposite the opening in the wall, which Wolfton could now see clearly was the mouth of a still darker alley. His heart leaped with hope as he saw the coolie turn into it without looking around. The solution seemed suddenly laughably simple to the American. All he would have to do would be to walk quietly ahead, follow the main alley until he had passed the opening, and then bolt for whatever liberty he might be able to gain. The Chinese seemed to be quite unconcerned about him and would not miss him immediately. Perhaps the strollers would follow Kwong, and the sound of their footsteps would make up for the lack of his own.

He could reach the Boulevard des deux Republiques in a few minutes, jump into a cab, and drive to the American Consulate. This passed quickly through his mind.

AS HE came abreast of the opening into which Kwong had turned and been lost in darkness, Wolfton kept his face straight ahead and walked, as casually as he could, directly past the gloomy alley, leaving his guide to go his own way. A few steps beyond, the American began to walk faster. He threw a hurried glance over his shoulder and was infinitely gratified to see that the figures of the two strollers from Foochow Road had also turned into the side alley, and were, to all appearances, going blandly about their own business, which made Wolfton slightly ashamed that he had let them perturb him so much.

But the luck he had so far enjoyed did not keep him from breaking into a self-defensive trot. In another minute he was running lightly on the balls of his feet, making the least possible amount of noise.

It was the appropriate time to congratulate himself on a clever maneuver, he believed, for now, some four hundred feet ahead of him, he saw that the alley again

broke angularly, in a double turn, and that from beyond shone bright lights, which seemed to prove that he had regained the immediate vicinity of the French Concession. All that remained necessary was to get into a 'rik'sha or a cab. With the relief which this conclusion brought, he fell back into a rather leisurely walking pace, one which would not excite suspicion.

He turned to the right, following the first angle of the alley. The bright lights from beyond the second bend flashed upon him. As he walked hurriedly he inspected his clothes and, noticing that a shoelace had come undone, paused to tie it, placing his foot upon a jutting brick in the wall of the alley.

With the bending down that this required, the American's eyes were cast back so that he had a command of the section of the alley through which he had just walked, and into his view came, moving without the slightest hurry, three figures. Immediately Wolfton recognized them as Kwong and the two strollers from Foochow Road. Without the least show of surprise the three came down the alley together toward him.

CHAPTER V

UNUSUAL HOSPITALITY

THE courtesy and lack of agitation with which Kwong greeted Wolfton as he came up made the latter feel vaguely ashamed of his flight, for the coolie had all the air of a friend distressed that he had proven a bad guide.

"'Melican gentleman lose way?" asked the coolie. "No tlouble! Master stop inside. Master Dlomelic. This master house," he added, gesturing toward the bend in the alley from which came the flood of light.

In a moment Wolfton summarized the situation. Here he was on the threshold of the man who had offered him hospitality after giving him infinite annoyance. Here, on the other side of him, were what appeared to be three of that man's servants. It was clear that, whether he wished to accept the lame man's invitation or not, he might be forced, against his will, to go wherever these three smiling, but no less solid, Chinese wished him to. There was something in the way the two strollers of Foochow Road stood, quietly, respectfully, but immovably, between him and the road by which he had entered, which suggested completed decision and an open defiance, even, of any plans Wolfton might have that they did not choose to approve.

The American was somewhat chagrined to stand before these three who knew as well as he did that he had tried to escape them, and who waited politely beside him, ignoring the facts. A spirit of bravado, the natural outcome of a mental tangle from which one cannot conveniently extricate oneself, occupied him. What the devil was the matter with him, he asked himself, that he should fear these people or fear Domeric or fear any one? He had never before been given to fearing people. Had he not served a good eighteen months in France in the daily expectation of being killed, and had he gone about then riddled with fear? He turned quickly and started in the direction of the light.

ROUNDING the second corner of the alley, Wolfton came upon a courtyard at the far side of which was a wall, perhaps ten feet in height, Chinese in every detail, from the roof-like structure covering it to the dragon design running over the gateway. The entire façade was strung with brilliant lanterns. The

closed door was of black, wide board, and to the right of this hung a gong, beside which, depended on a cord, was a brass hammer, green with age.

Kwong, who had quickly passed Wolfton, sounded three loud peals on the gong, and the door was immediately opened. Within the gateway was a smaller court, at the rear of which stood a low building composed of what appeared to be several separate houses joined together by short, enclosed hallways. The architecture was an adaptation of the Chinese. The place looked as though it had been reconditioned to suit special needs.

Again Kwong preceded Wolfton, and announced him, when the door had been opened, to a servant in an elaborately embroidered Chinese coat which reached the ankles.

The American was escorted through several rooms equipped in the most luxurious fashion. It was plain that Domeric was a man of immense wealth, for the house was characterized by a great show of expensive appointments. Presently they reached a closed door before which the servant paused. He touched a button set in the adjoining panel, and a moment later there was a clicking sound of the lock, and the servant threw the door open and ushered Wolfton in.

THE contrast between this room and the others in the house was so great that it left the American quite speechless for a moment. Its almost complete darkness, for one stepping into it from the outside light, was dismal and not altogether pleasant. A period of several seconds elapsed before he could distinguish the main characteristics of the room, but gradually his eyes became adjusted to the light. He saw that its nature was far more that of a hall, and that its stone walls, only dimly discernible by the light of a single tall candle which stood in a pewter stick near the centre of the great bare space, were inclined toward the ceiling at such a degree as to give the impression of a continuous curve from the floor, though actually there was an abrupt break at the top of the arch. No window furnished air or light; there was no aperture of any sort noticeable.

In the centre of this amazing room stood a long blackwood table, Chinese in line though without ornament, severe and cold. On the side nearest the door, seated with his back in that direction, was a man whose costume, equally as strange as the room, gave no clue to his identity or nationality. From the distance of the door, the figure had the appearance of a dummy, dressed up in a straight, black robe, fashioned in the general mode of the Manchu dress, though of utmost severity of line and with no elaboration. The chair in which he sat was also of hard blackwood, without upholstery of any sort. The head of this grotesque figure was topped with a small black cap which followed the shape of the skull and was without visor or brim of any kind.

The Chinese servant addressed the figure, which immediately rose and turned in the direction of the approaching American.

"You are welcome, indeed, Mr. Wolfton. I am very glad you have come," said Domeric, bowing his black-capped head, while the American watched him with mixed curiosity and perplexity. Domeric turned to his servant who stood at the door and ordered him in Chinese to wait. "To-night," he continued, as he turned back to his guest, "I shall not even be able to accompany you to your rooms, which have been

made ready for you, nor to talk with you, for I am in the midst of some research work in which I cannot be disturbed. I assure you that I do not wish to be inhospitable. But I also assure you that everything shall be done which will in any way contribute to your comfort. Quin Chong will see to that."

DURING this strange welcome Domeric had stood looking directly into the eyes of the American. Something of horror passed through Wolfton at the man's almost insanely concentrated gaze. He feared the eyes which penetrated him as though he were nothing more puzzling than clear water. The atmosphere of the hall with its single flickering light, and the manner of this severely thoughtful man, made Wolfton suddenly wonder if he had not made some terrible mistake in coming here. But almost at the same instant this fear was dispelled and he felt himself drawn irresistibly toward the man's mind. In Domeric, he felt certain, was something that he had been seeking for many years. He remembered that, earlier in the evening, he had labeled the man and his power as diabolical, and now he wanted to dwell upon that memory, to question its soundness, but Domeric spoke and drew his mind quickly away. The host's courtesy was as grandiose as an Oriental's. Whatever else the man might be, he was, Wolfton decided, certainly a gentleman.

"Your dressing-case," said Domeric, not attempting to repress the smile which flashed across his countenance—"your *own* dressing-case, that is—the one you had with you at the Hotel Palace—has been put into your rooms. It was brought by a special runner who got here before you did. The servants have drawn water for a bath, if you wish one, and will serve you whatever you may want in the way of food or wines.

"Since it is already after midnight, I presume that you will retire before very long; and, of course, you will arise in the morning when you are quite ready to. In the afternoon or evening I shall be most pleased to see you and explain many things which at present must be disturbing your curiosity, if not your very peace of mind."

Domeric turned again to his servant, giving him directions as to his guest's comfort. Then he wished Wolfton a good night, and assured him that he would be very foolish indeed to allow the events of the past eighteen hours to trouble him in the least, and more foolish to worry about the outcome of them or about his own personal safety.

At this he showed plainly, by seating himself, that he wished to be left alone, and Wolfton, bidding him good night, followed Quin Chong, the servant, to his rooms.

During his stay in China the American had visited many elaborate show places, and had been admitted to the gorgeous homes of some very wealthy and influential Chinese. But nowhere had he seen such a profusion of beautiful and expensive things as he now saw about him. Hangings, rare and ancient, brasses and trinkets not only from China but from Japan, Burma, and Nepal. Treasures representing all the minor and most of the major arts of a half-dozen different oriental and eastern countries were everywhere. Yet an eye for effects had seen to it that there should be none of the atmosphere of the museum; in no place were there more pieces of cloisonné or of lacquer or of brass than were appropriate for

the best effects; and, besides, in each room there was distinct personality.

WOLFTON walked along behind the servant, paying no more than casual attention to all this luxury, for suddenly, following all the excitement of the past eight hours, he found himself very tired. Questions much more important than the wealth of his host occupied his mind, but he decided to banish them all completely and give himself a well-deserved sleep — a decision which was, no doubt, prompted partially by a premonition of the difficult and perhaps dangerous problems which he would have to meet on the following day. Curiously enough, he felt that, for the night at least, his security was certain, assured, here in this unbelievably luxurious palace, in the heart of the treacherous Native City, in the hands of as extraordinary a man as he had ever met. Why he felt this, he could not have told. It might have been a result of the power of Domeric's assertions; it might have been the fruit of an indolence growing out of a bravado which had supported him, thus far, very pleasingly.

He declined the offers of food, but accepted a whisky and soda, over which he sat a few minutes and rehearsed the incredibility of his day.

Perhaps ten minutes had elapsed when he heard a gentle knock on the door of his room.

EXPECTING it to be Quin Chong with still another offer of food, he called out that he was preparing to go to bed immediately, and turned back to his drink. The next minute he was astonished to see the door open, and to find entering the room the most beautiful Chinese woman he had ever seen. She came toward him slowly, a strange expression of appeal playing across what must have been a more habitual expression of sad acceptance of injustice—as though she wished to ask for help, yet feared that words would only bring down the lash of more injustice and torment. At the same time her attitude was that of one who had come to fascinate because she was either determined or required to fascinate. She puzzled Wolfton exceedingly.

He asked her what she wanted. An American habit prompted him to rise, and before he knew it he was standing. This seemed to surprise and slightly frighten the girl, who took a step backward.

"But—I don't want anything of you," Wolfton stammered, partly out of embarrassment and partly because his imagination had already suggested that she had come, under orders, first to cajole him and later, perhaps in the dead of the night, to—well—poison him. Such things had happened before to persons under similar circumstances.

"I don't want you here, little Jasmine Ears. You had better trot right along back to where you came from."

The girl did not seem to understand his actions, though she evidently understood his words, for she smiled slightly at the name he had given her. She stood quietly before the American, who became more and more agitated by her calmness.

Being no aspirant to the halo-wearing orders, and having no greater amount of vanity about his strength of will than the average, normal man, Wolfton decided that if he wished to be rid of the girl he had better show her more definitely that he did not wish her company, and that immediately. He

walked past her to the door, which he threw open.

"Thank you for coming," he said, with considerable show of embarrassment, "and thank your master as well, but I shall really be quite comfortable alone."

At this the girl's face became, in good Chinese fashion, quite expressionless. She seemed to be unable to believe that he was actually dismissing her. In a confused tone she said: 'Thank you, Master," and slipped noiselessly out of the room, leaving the American wondering whether he had angered or pleased her.

A little later, more tired and puzzled than before, he went to sleep in a bed which had evidently been designed for the sole purpose of sending its occupant rapidly and surely into a peaceful land of dreams.

CHAPTER VI

A PERSISTENT ODOR

WHEN Wolfton awoke on the following day he was greatly surprised to find that it was high noon. It was a rare occurrence for him to sleep beyond nine o'clock at any time, even during weeks of busy days and late hours, and as he got up and rang for the boy he wondered how he had managed such complete relaxation under such unsettled conditions.

During his bath and as he dressed, he became distinctly aware of a faint though persistent odor which seemed to hang in his nostrils —an odor not unpleasant even to him who disliked oriental perfumes and incense, but one from which he could not seem to release himself. He smoked, and the inhalations tasted strongly of something which he believed had a close association with the odor, though his senses of smell and taste were not acute enough to make him certain.

After dressing he glanced at his watch. His astonishment was great when he found that the numerals, from the distance he was accustomed to read them, were almost illegible. Moving the watch nearer, he found that he could see each minute line perfectly, but it was necessary to bring it considerably closer to read the numerals under the second hand.

Had the odor which had been so noticeable when he first got up not persisted, he would probably have given it no further thought; but because it did, he tried to conjure up causes for it. He had read and heard of strange potions which made men sleep when they had no particular longing to sleep. He knew that opium was, even though barred officially from the foreign settlements of Shanghai, procurable from agents of smugglers; but he also knew enough about that drug, from talking with people who were well acquainted with it, to be very positive that its odor was in no way similar to that which now persisted in his nostrils.

Quin Chong interrupted his speculations with breakfast, a sumptuous outlay of oriental delicacies and western necessities. The sight of food dispelled for the moment everything but a hearty desire to eat. Wolfton discovered that during the night he had accumulated a substantial appetite, and he did ample justice to his host's generosity.

A *chit* was brought him, when he had finished eating, by the boy, who explained that it was from his master. In it Domeric apologized for his absence, saying that urgent affairs in connection with freeing Wolfton from the complications of

the previous day would occupy him until evening, that he trusted his guest was being made comfortable, and that he would return in time for a late dinner, at which, he hoped, Mr. Wolfton would join him.

DINNER, served only shortly before nine o'clock, was in every respect a feast, and, coming at the end of a day which had been entirely uneventful and not a little tiresome, Wolfton found it doubly pleasant. During the afternoon he had lounged about in an indolence which was not natural to him. Domeric's *chit* had reassured him that everything was being done in his behalf; and with the comfortable belief that on the following day he would be able to board the *President Pierce*, he had allowed himself the luxury of laziness.

Just before they sat down to dinner Domeric made himself clear, in a peculiarly serious manner, about one point. It was his intention, he explained, to make no reference whatever to anything that had happened on the previous day or to what he himself had been doing since then.

"You see, Mr. Wolfton," he said, "I have lived in China for more than twenty years, and have come to regard some of the oriental ways as superior to our own. For instance, I shall not under any circumstances discuss the annoying affairs of yesterday until we have enjoyed a pleasant meal together. To do so would be very boorish indeed. After dinner we shall go to the room in which you found me last night, and there we shall talk things over."

An absinthe cocktail was served before they sat down, and during the meal the American was served his choice from a long wine list, with excellent Château Pontet-Canet, imported from France, while Domeric drank an ordinary white wine which he declared he preferred. Neither drank gluttonously, but took enough to make his dinner pleasant. A vast assortment of Chinese dishes was served, many of which Wolfton had never before had the opportunity of tasting. Minced chicken with shark's fins, steamed mushrooms and bamboo sprouts, fried rice, Chinese green beans, pickled pears, sour-sweet ginger, water-chestnuts—there was no end to the small dishes of delicacies which servants continually brought in and replaced as soon as they had been sampled.

Never in his life had the American been treated in a more hospitable fashion. The servants' deference to him was second only to that which they showed their master, and Domeric's own courtesy was flawless. He talked in a most engaging manner of a great variety of interesting topics relating to life in China, the customs of the natives of remote provinces, the influence of the whites, and through all his absorbing information he scattered innumerable anecdotes which illustrated his meaning and formed the background for the most delightful two hours Wolfton could remember having spent.

CHAPTER VII

LIEBNITZ MAKES A DEMONSTRATION

IT WAS perhaps two hours later that Howard Wolfton received the biggest shock of his life.

Directly after finishing their liqueurs Domeric had excused himself, saying that Quin Chong would serve Mr. Wolfton in any respect he wished, and inviting him to join him later on in the large, dark hall,

which he described simply as "the large room."

Upon entering the hall some time later the American decided that his host had not yet arrived, for the place was apparently vacant. He could not imagine what idiosyncrasy in the man had prompted him to suggest such a dismal, uncomfortable place for a conversation. He was a little perplexed, though gratified, to find that the vague fear which the room had inspired in him on the previous night had completely disappeared.

He walked into the dark-vaulted place, his footsteps resounding loudly. When he stopped he heard a slight click behind him, and, turning, saw that the door by which he had come in, the only entrance to the place, had closed, apparently by the hand of some one outside. The sense of being shut in was not pleasant, and Wolfton turned quickly, retracing his steps to the door. But he found it would not open. A strong feeling of annoyance surged up in him, a feeling which was presently converted, to his amazement, into one of sudden helplessness. He was about to pound on the door in the hope of having it opened when he heard Domeric's voice address him calmly from the far side of the room.

"This is not the most comfortable room in the house," the host said, "but it is the only one in which one can think properly and talk without distraction. Westerners do not know, in general, how to think, and since I am natively a westerner, I have to resort to methods which will help me."

If he had noticed the American's irritation at finding himself locked in, nothing about his demeanor showed it.

Only now was Wolfton able to see him clearly, and to his astonishment he found that the lame man had changed from his street clothes into that grotesque black costume, and that he wore on his head the absurd little black cap. If he had not felt so distinctly uncomfortable, the American would have found it difficult to repress a laugh at the spectacle before him, which reminded him strongly of boyhood ghost parties.

AT DOMERIC'S invitation he sat down on a straight, wooden chair at the end of the long table in the center of the room, while his host seated himself at the other end of the table. There was suddenly a rather domineering unpleasantness about Domeric, who, without further preamble, began to talk with a seriousness which made Wolfton feel distinctly uncomfortable.

"It is already well after midnight," the man began. He settled back into the hard chair, his arms laid squarely along its arms, his head resting easily against the high back. His position showed that he was preparing for a rather long talk.

"There is," he continued slowly, in a matter-of-fact tone, "a great deal to be said and not very much time in which to say it. You understand, we have only until four o'clock."

Up to this point, Wolfton had been at first too amazed and then too uncomfortable to understand anything very clearly. These words served only to throw him into utter confusion of mind, so that several minutes passed in which nothing at all was said. Domeric interrupted the silence which, in this dark hall, with its single flickering light, was unspeakably eerie.

"Of course you do not understand. You do not understand anything at

all. It is all strange to you, and well it might be."

The tone in which this was said was so severe that it threw Wolfton into a flood of protest and questioning.

"You must realize, Mr. Domeric, that I have had a rather complete upheaval of my natural course in the past thirty-six hours," he declared. "And, quite naturally, many things which would seem reasonable under ordinary circumstances appear enigmatic to me now. I must admit that I'm perfectly at sea as to what this is all about. I carry your bag off the ship. I am arrested. I am put under guard at my hotel. I receive a letter from you warning me that I am in imminent danger and that you wish to offer me hospitality. I follow your servant, the most mysterious coolie I have ever encountered in my life, through all of Shanghai here to your palace, or whatever it might be called. I am given every consideration. I am treated like an honored guest. Then I am brought into this dungeon-like place—you must admit that it's unspeakably unpleasant here — and I am asked if I understand that we have only until four o'clock!"

DURING all this rather explosive expression of annoyance, the lame man had remained sitting quietly with not a trace of interest on his face. When the American had ceased talking he began.

"What possessed you to try to escape from Kwong?" he asked suddenly, almost ferociously. "That was an inordinately stupid prank."

Wolfton was dumfounded. He could not muster a word either in protest or explanation, and relaxed sullenly into his chair. It provoked him beyond words that he should be made to sit before some one whom he had never seen until the previous night and accept, without any logical way of retorting, words which were nothing short of insulting. But chiefly he was provoked, angered, by the sudden realization that already this man before him had won a battle over him. He did not even suspect that he was physically trapped, but he knew definitely that some profound power in the other man had set its superiority against a lack of similar power in himself, and that the heel of the conqueror was almost upon him. What that power in Domeric could be, and what the lack in himself, he could not have told. All he knew was that something within him had suffered defeat. He heard the man talking again.

"The sooner we get rid of the preamble, the sooner we shall get to the laws. Now briefly: The suitcase you carried off the ship *was* my possession. The officers at the docks *were* official customs men. The valise contained over two thousand gold dollars' worth of high-grade opium. My name is Ivan Liebnitz. The papers indicating me to be T. Alexander Domeric, by which I secured my release from the customs officials and which I have used on other important occasions, were all forgeries. My worst enemies in China are the members of the Municipal Council of Shanghai."

THE first effect of these announcements on Wolfton was to paralyze him mentally and physically for a few seconds. But before the lame man had finished his last sentence, the suddenly awakening instinct of self-preservation made the American leap up from his chair and stand tensely ready for any emergency.

But it was very clear to Wolfton

that his insidious host had anticipated him, for no more had he started to rise from his chair than he saw Domeric lift his right hand quickly and heard him say, in the same unruffled tone of voice: "Quin Chong! Kwong!" And immediately, from the extreme end of the hall, out of obscure shadows came the two Chinese servants. They did not appear to be armed. At least, if they were armed, they were making no show of their weapons.

Liebnitz turned to Kwong.

"All right, Kwong," he said casually, as though bored by the whole procedure, and in a moment Wolfton heard the report of an automatic. He had only time enough to see the servant whip something out from under his jacket before the hall was thrown into sudden complete darkness. Almost immediately a match was struck and the American saw Quin Chong digging in the candle for the wick, the top of which had been cut off precisely at the end of the wax.

Liebnitz turned to the American, who stood trembling slightly at the shock. He looked straight into the American's eyes and said sarcastically: "Don't bother to rise. There are no ladies in the room."

Wolfton knew now that he was being deliberately insulted. But he knew as well that one unwise move would send him whirling into an eternity of more uncertain darkness than this small hall could ever boast. His place, it was perfectly obvious now, was in the hard chair at the end of the table, across from as unpleasant a man as he had ever dreamed could exist.

"COME," that man was saying, "we are losing time, and we have very little to spare." His eyes showed the tremendous concentration of a powerful brain. Wolfton looked quickly away; there was something truly diabolic about the way the eyes penetrated into him, held him, and the American felt shaken under them.

"I shall tell you everything, for it will be necessary for you to know, now that we are going to work together. If you will be good enough to sit quietly and listen to what I have to say, there will be no need for a repetition of the rather melodramatic show of marksmanship which you have just witnessed. Kwong, as opposed to most Chinese, is an almost dead-sure shot—that is, as long as he is treated the way he wants to be, which is also something you cannot understand, and need not for the time being.

"You have come here because I offered you hospitality. I have given you that, and I expect to give you a great many things which I have not promised. Of course, you have not asked anything of me, and all this is against your will, which I truly regret; but that cannot be helped."

LIEBNITZ fell silent for a moment. He adjusted himself in his chair.

"I need you," he continued suddenly, "to take the leading part in the greatest enterprise that man has ever conceived.

"Your trivial existence as a real estate man in California does not fit you for this great work in any respect. If you were that alone, I should not have bothered about you at all. But in the talk we had on the *Florence Dollar* you showed yourself to be harboring a germ which is utterly necessary in the man who is to carry out this enterprise successfully. It is the germ which stirs up the disease of in-

satiable restlessness—a hunger for danger and experience, a natural inclination for the life of the daredevil.

"No normally sane business man would have climbed out of the window of the Hotel Palace on the strength of a note from a man who had sent him, practically, and in as mean a manner as is conceivable, to jail. No reasoning man, except one with a terrible thirst for adventure, would have gone to sleep in this house last night after seeing and talking to me in this hall—yes, I admit that it is ghastly. . . .

"I am not acquainted with your past life in detail. I do know something of it, however, beyond what I have read in you for myself, and beyond what you have told me. Since last evening I have received a quite exhaustive and quite expensive cablegram in which was an account of your life in Palo Alto and in France.

"It is your life in France that interests me—your experience as a flier. I was gratified to find that, though you did not brag about it, you were three times decorated in France for accomplishing difficult and dangerous feats, which other men were too backward or too sane to attempt."

THE speaker did not move or change his expression as he talked. His impenetrability was like that of a Chinese.

Wolfton, on the other hand, was fidgeting about in his chair and sweating profusely. The chill atmosphere of the hall did not prevent him from becoming uncomfortably hot. He mopped his forehead and chin, and looked savagely at the man across the table.

He seemed now, to himself, to be a pure mental and physical coward. Inaction was the cause of this feeling, Wolfton realized. He told himself repeatedly that he must *do* something. He knew himself well enough to know that his nervousness and cowardice would leave him once he was in action. But he was not fool enough to invite a test of the already proven marksmanship of the servant Kwong.

For the time being, at any rate, there was nothing to do but sit in the chair and listen to what the amazing Ivan Liebnitz had to say. Indeed, it was his only security, and he accepted it.

"As I have said," continued his rude host, "no sane man, unless he had this germ in him, would do the absurd things that you have done, and for that reason you interest me greatly in connection with this vast enterprise of which I speak. Since 1906 I have been expending every ounce of my energy, every minute of my time, every bit of my brain power, on making the success of this enterprise a certainty, and only within the past month have I seen my time drawing near. The past week has proven to me that I cannot lose. You should count it a great honor that, on the eve of my victory, the fruit of more than twenty years of hard labor and no small amount of suffering, you should be given the opportunity of hearing about its approach and of taking, not an insignificant part, but one of the leading rôles in it."

IN SPITE of his chagrin, his irritation and his fear, Wolfton's curiosity was aroused.

"What is the enterprise?" he asked, interrupting a sentence the other was beginning.

"You are impatient. That is another symptom of your disease. You shall hear all about it, but you must

follow step by step. You would not even understand it if I should tell you now."

His scrutiny as he talked was so severe and so intense that it made the American feel slightly dizzy, as though he had been subjected, for a moment, to the dominating power of the other's mind. For some reason that he could not explain, Wolfton suddenly recalled the peculiar odor that he had been so conscious of in the morning. Thinking back, he remembered that he had noticed it throughout his breakfast, after which time it seemed to have vanished.

"I have spared myself no hardship in this work. I have even lost a leg for it, and I would gladly lose an arm. God, man!" Liebnitz cried suddenly with an enthusiasm which surprised Wolfton. "Have you any conception of what it is to have power—power—to be powerful?"

But immediately he lapsed back into what seemed his normal state—that of calm deliberation stripped of all sentiment.

CHAPTER VIII

AFTER TWENTY YEARS

LIEBNITZ looked at his watch. It was plain that the passage of time disturbed him, for he thrust the timepiece back under his black robe with an impatient gesture and fell to talking hurriedly.

"See here, Howard Wolfton! You are a good flier. Am I right?" He did not wait for confirmation, but continued as though he had not asked a question. "You have directed other men in the air. You have put squadrons through maneuvers. You know something of bombs, and you could, if necessary, conduct a bombing raid. . . . No—don't try to interrupt me. . . . I shall answer no questions and listen to nothing you say. Your function is to sit quietly in that chair and listen to me.

"For over twenty years, as I have said, I have been working on a plan. At various periods during these years it has seemed that the plan was about to bring what I have desired. But each time I have failed because I could not find the right man to do the active leading which, because of my infirmity, I cannot hope to do personally; and this active leading, by a *white* man, is essential.

"For more than twenty years I have spent six months of each year visiting in the provinces and six months in Shanghai, which has been my headquarters. I speak most of the dialects, and know the characteristics of the natives of the various sections. There is not another foreigner in all of China with the power and the following that I have created for myself.

"Do you understand me? I talk from the standpoint of one who has poured his life blood into a single enterprise. I am a great organizer. The wealth and influence behind me are incalculable. Every one in my great army of workers, every one of my agents, is sworn to utter secrecy; and the fact that during all these years only two men out of the vast number have received the penalty of death for proving themselves unworthy of the trust placed in them, is proof of the power through sympathy that I have established for myself.

"I took the trouble, you see, to learn the ways of the Chinese, to adopt their customs and to win their confidence, long before I made a single move. China has been for many years a country of confused individuals, with no leader strong enough

to hold them together, no *will* forceful enough to dominate theirs. Now a leader has risen up in their midst, a leader who had the vision to study the history of Chinese subjection through the ages, and who discovered the secret of the Mongol success—a leader who shall go down in history as the most preposterous Napoleon, the most aggressive Alexander the Great, who ever lived."

Liebnitz looked piercingly into the eyes of the American.

"I am now prepared to inform you that you are at this minute seated before one who, coming to China twenty-two years ago a pauper, is now the wealthiest and most powerful man in the Orient—Ivan Liebnitz, the Dictator of China, the uncrowned Emperor of the Greater Far East."

NO POMPOSITY, aside from that of the words themselves, showed itself in the manner of the man as he made this unbelievable announcement. As silent, as submerged in contemplation, and as dark as a cold, metal Buddhist image, the lame man sat, staring straight before him. He did not appear to realize that his gaze was focused with ghastly intensity on the eyes of the American. Wolfton felt as though the full power of some diabolic sun were being concentrated in the concavity of a magnifying-glass, and that the fearful light thus captured was being used to burn through his eyes into his very brain. The dizziness which he had once before experienced became noticeable, and again, for a reason entirely inexplicable, he recalled the odor he had noticed upon awaking in the morning. The effect of this and of the words of Ivan Liebnitz was such as to leave him altogether helpless, physically and mentally; he felt himself reclining, rather than sitting, in the hard, blackwood chair.

"You," said the lame man now, "are, of course, nothing more than an instrument. But you are one of the most important of all the instruments in the operation. I am the master surgeon. You are my sharpest knife. And this, Mr. Wolfton, is because of the germ of restlessness in you, and because, in reality, you are little higher in the scale of free mental development than the moron—the obvious plaything of any powerful mind, the agent, for the asking or the taking, of any one capable of modeling your pliable brain."

Again anticipating the result of his words, Liebnitz had summoned Kwong with a single gesture before the American was completely out of his chair. The servant stood patiently, impassively, beside his master, making no show of the weapon under his jacket, but ready at the fraction of a second's notice to display his efficiency as a sharpshooter.

"I DESPISE taking advantage of the weak," the Dictator continued just as though Wolfton had agreed heartily with his statement, "but once in a while it is necessary. My personal opinion, furthermore, is that you are safe under the direction of my mind, and are less likely to come to grief under my control than you would be as an unclaimed instrument, the admitted possession of any one who wished to make use of your brain for the furtherance of his own aims.

"You have always been under the direction of one or another mind stronger than your own. All your life you have been fighting other people's battles, and for that reason

I do not feel unjust in enlisting your services for an enterprise which will at least bring you wealth, and as much power as your mentality makes you eligible for.

"Already you have signed over to me the greater part of your will power. You are utterly pliable in my hands. Perhaps I might not have been able to accomplish the victory so quickly if you had not been so willing to help. Your first mistake was in entering this room last night. Though you did not know it, and, indeed, do not now, you signed over to me in those very few minutes about an ounce, let us say, of your meager pound of will power. Naturally I fought for it, and I perhaps took it rather than accepted it. However that may be, I came into possession of it.

"Your second mistake was in sending away, as though she had been any little snipe of the streets, the most beautiful of my women, calling her, impudently, 'little Jasmine Ears,' as unconscious of her rank and beauty as of the insult you were giving both her and me. Had you not been so rude you would not have got up in the morning with a strange fragrance pestering your nostrils. 'Little Jasmine Ears,' as you chose to call her, administered what I have been too hospitable to use. It is to 'little Jasmine Ears' that you owe your complete loss of will power, and about this I am somewhat provoked, since I had decided that I would make my victory over you purely mental subject you by sheer intellectual force. But it does not matter very much. The same desired effect has been brought about more rapidly, and, indeed, my plans are somewhat facilitated by it, for I can start you to work at any time I desire."

By this time Wolfton, who had felt himself sinking deeper and deeper into his chair, as though the very life blood were flowing out of him, was in such a state of confusion and fear and half-belief of what the man before him was saying that he experienced a distinct nausea, like that of a man who, rising for the first time after a severe operation and a long period in bed, attempts to walk, only to find that he has not the strength to place one foot in front of the other, and is sickened by his helplessness. He was no longer master of himself. He did not dare to look into Liebnitz's eyes any longer. But to his dismay he found that invariably, after a short period of wandering, his eyes returned and became fixed on the glare of the dictator's. The appeal he made to himself to awake and *do* something, to strike back, to fight, mocked him. He sat like an automaton, just as he had during all this talk, and, to his utter horror, he presently found that a feeling, like that of sleep was approaching, out of which he could in no way stir himself.

He could only half hear the words of the Dictator as they continued to resound, like falling water, through the dismal, stone hall.

"Out in the provinces," he dimly heard the voice say, "is a loyal little band of mine. Now listen attentively—you are not sleeping; you are merely under my control. Out in the provinces a loyal little band of mine is awaiting my orders and your leadership. Sit still! I shall tell you when to move! From now on I shall direct every move you make, and almost every thought you entertain—remember that. You are not asleep, do you understand? You are merely controlled. You are *completely* under my control—remember that. You can do nothing,

think nothing, which I do not sanction. Bear these things in mind constantly: they are of the utmost importance. And do not try to sleep, for you cannot until I will it. You must understand that, and remember it!"

The voice was not domineering now, but persuasive.

"You must remember that I am the Dictator of China and the Emperor of the Greater Far East. You must remember that. You are my instrument, my sharpest instrument; you must remember that."

Liebnitz looked searchingly into the American's eyes.

"Tell me, now—what are the things, Mr. Howard Wolfton, that you *must remember?*"

TO WOLFTON, now dazed and sleepy, it seemed that he heard from a great distance a voice which closely resembled his own, repeating with definite, slow articulation the cardinal features which Liebnitz had commanded him to remember. It did not trouble him very much that the voice resembled his own. In fact, nothing troubled him very much now, for a delicious lassitude had crept over him. He knew that he existed, but very little more; and suddenly he experienced a genuine elation at the thought that he need not bother himself about anything any more, since everything, down to the minutest detail, had been planned and cared for, and all he had to do was to follow the directions of a quite pleasant voice which seemed to come to him from a distance, a little indistinct, yet conveying meaning in the most exact and satisfying way. He heard that voice which resembled his own drifting off into nothingness after repeating the words "Emperor of the Greater Far East."

"GOOD!" declared Ivan Liebnitz. "Now you are beginning to understand me. I am seeing more and more that you will do very well. Now, then. . . . Out in the provinces, you remember my saying, is a loyal band, sworn to the execution of all commands from the Dictator. Some, Mr. Wolfton, are like yourself, and in them I have complete confidence. I have complete confidence in you, you remember. It pleases me particularly that, as you remember, you have sworn allegiance to the Empire and to me the Emperor, and that you will execute, along with all my other servants, each command that I shall make. I am glad that you remember your oath, and I am confident that you will not forget it in time to come.

"And now, Howard Wolfton, since you have accepted the great responsibility I have liberally given you, and since you have declared that you can support it, I cannot see that there is very much more for us to discuss. You remember that, since you are in sole charge of the Flying Squadron, it is your duty to rehearse as rapidly as possible in your mind the chief features of the raid we have planned together. As you recall, the eleven planes are now standing a few miles southwest of Shanghai, awaiting, first, my orders to you, and, secondly, your directions. In a little more than a half-hour, since it is already almost three, we must start for the landing field in my car. After to-night, since that will enable you better to carry out your duties and responsibilities, you are to have a car and chauffeur of your own, as you recall I promised in our last conference, three weeks ago.

"Now tell me, Mr. Wolfton, have I the general outline of the raid clearly in my own mind? Listen attentively and correct me if I digress from the plans we previously laid out together. As I remember it, the plan was for you to assume control of the squadron at the landing field, thence to direct the flight, with the help of your competent pilot Kwong, over the city of Shanghai, bombing the following buildings, with which both you and Kwong are entirely familiar."

The Dictator stopped and looked intently at Wolfton.

"First, approaching from the southwest, the Cercle Sportie Français and the French Club, then these others as the flight is continued towards the Whangpoo River: the Avenue Joffre French Police and Fire Stations, the French Municipal Offices, the Customs House, the Hotel Palace, the Club Concordia, His Britannic Majesty's Consulate, the Garden Bridge, and finally the group of foreign consulates beyond—the German, American, and Japanese. One plane, as I recall it, is to fly alone and to the east of the main squadron, so that the Kiangnan Arsenal Dock, the East Police Station, and the French Consulate shall not be slighted."

Liebnitz continued to glare into the wide-open, tired-looking eyes before him.

"I see," he said very slowly, "that you remember it all in detail. Do we seem to agree in everything?"

Even though the American did not answer, Liebnitz seemed satisfied to accept a nod of the head with which Wolfton had involuntarily indicated his assent.

"Very good. And you remember, of course, that we agreed to meet three miles west of Woosung village, after you have satisfactorily completed the raid, from which the planes will continue towards Nanking without you."

SOME five minutes passed now in which there was heavy silence. Then the Dictator began to talk again in a tone which was almost cordial. He seemed to be addressing the room as much as Wolfton.

"Twenty years is a long time to spend in preparing even a master stroke. But how infinitely worthwhile all the hardships and all the sacrifice! Here I sit to-night with victory assured. Nothing but to give the starting signal for the raid. In the morning every newspaper in the world that is worth its ink will be a conglomeration of reports of disaster and death. First of all there will be the unbelievable account of the mysterious bombardment by a squadron of unknown planes. Then there will be printed quotations from the words I wrote this afternoon, announcing certain important deaths, and comment on the preposterous note signed 'The Dictator':

> In the interest of timely news, the writer advises you that, as you read this letter, twenty prominent political and business men in the city are meeting necessary deaths.

"At the head of the list will be the name T. Alexander Domeric, which has served me so well in so many instances. And finally, there will be columns filled with the distressing news that an army whose vastness cannot be estimated is approaching Shanghai from the South, headed by officers in a strange uniform, who declare themselves under the orders of one whom they call merely 'The Dictator.' There will be panic such as no city in history has ever experienced. In a month there will not be in all of Shanghai, with the exception of yourself, Mr.

Wolfton, and The Dictator, a single living white man. Those who remain die. The only ones who have a right to life are the ones who will recognize it by taking their leave of China in the quickest manner they can invent. There will be no more killing than necessary. But a few deaths are essential to the success of any great cause. And then finally China will be saved. Aggressors will be banished for all time. The Dictator will become Emperor not alone of China, but in time of the entire Far East and, before he dies, of the World."

SUDDENLY Ivan Liebnitz sprang out of his chair.

"Kwong," he cried, "come here. I have instructions for you. And for you, Quin Chong! It is a quarter past three, and in exactly fifteen minutes we start for the landing field. It will take us precisely thirty minutes to drive out. And the planes must be in the air by four-fifteen at the very latest. I have numerous important details to see to before we leave."

Here he broke into Chinese, giving Quin Chong orders and saying something, as the servant reached the door, which made him show signs of great agitation and hurry out, closing the door behind him.

"Kwong," he ordered, turning to the coolie who was still as mysterious as ever to the American, "you are to remain here with Mr. Wolfton until you hear the great gong. Then you are to bring him to the main entrance, where we shall meet."

He turned to Wolfton, whom he had disregarded entirely for the past few minutes.

"At last we are on the eve of our victory, Wolfton. All these long years that we have struggled together have not been in vain. I could never have accomplished it without your help, you understand, your courage, your persistent and untiring effort through these twenty years. We have stood together well over this long period and we shall enjoy the fruits of our effort together."

Without another word Ivan Liebnitz turned abruptly and, walking with more noticeable difficulty than usual, dragging rather than lifting his artificial leg with each step, left the room. The door closed and clicked as he disappeared.

CHAPTER IX

THE WORM TURNS

DURING these exciting minutes Howard Wolfton had continued to sit placidly in his chair. Nothing mattered. Excitement no longer stirred any response in him. With an idle, disinterested fancy, he thought of himself as one whose body was dead and whose mind was only half alive.

But suddenly he was acutely conscious of a sharp pain in his left arm, such as might have been caused by the thrust of a long needle. Involuntarily he swore aloud. Then gradually it seemed to him that a fog was lifting from before his eyes, from his brain, and in the next instant he felt a sharp slap against the cheek, then one on his forehead, and his brain was made abruptly clear. He leaped out of his chair, fully alive, more awake and nervously intense than he had ever been before. He looked furiously about him in an effort to discover what had been the cause of these shocks. He was like a wild animal that had been stuck with a knife through the bars of the cage which separated it from its torturer.

Now his eyes fell upon Kwong, standing quietly before him with an automatic drawn and covering him, and at once he realized that the coolie's were the hands which had slapped his face so smartly. A torrent of reproach and angry expostulation flowed from the American's lips. The sound of his own words, loud and determined, made him suddenly realize that he had come back to consciousness out of a lethargy which he could only dimly remember but which he knew had been horrible. He regained confidence in himself and took three quick steps toward the coolie with the intention of snatching the weapon from his hands. But the little Chinese was far too quick for him. With Wolfton's advance he jumped quickly to the far side of the long table. With the gun leveled at the American's heart he commanded, in flawless English:

"Stand there, Howard Wolfton, and do not make a single move if you value your life above a Chinese copper."

WOLFTON fell back a step with utter amazement. This coolie, the lowest of servants, ordering him about in English which put Wolfton's own to shame with its pleasant intonations and superior diction! It was unthinkable. Then the American remembered the voice on the boat, the Chinese voice reading political history.

Kwong was talking rapidly but quietly.

"Do not move, I implore you, and do not make a sound! I use the word implore to convey a very definite meaning. I am not an *enemy* of yours but a friend, and if you will do me the honor of being silent long enough to hear what I have to say, in an attempt to save your life and my own, I shall be most grateful to you. We have no more than ten minutes at our disposal. If we remain beyond that time we shall be involved in the most atrocious, the most despicable, and the most sinister of imaginable crimes. You must listen to me, sir. You must believe me when I say that I am a friend. And in a moment you shall know why."

Even if the gun had not been there, Wolfton would have listened to what the Chinese had to say. Indeed, he could not well get into deeper and more troublesome complications than he was already in, and through Kwong there might be some alternative offered. He showed his willingness to listen by seating himself in the blackwood chair. Physically he was slightly nervous; mentally he felt not only normal but as though his brain were clarified to an unusual degree.

"FIRST of all," said Kwong, "I am more American than Chinese. The Americans have not been kind to me for nothing. It will interest you to know that I have received the degree of Master of Science from Corness University. If it were not for the insidious interference of Master Liebnitz"—he uttered these last two words with a mixture of unstinted derogation and ill-concealed fear—"I should at this time be studying at Oxford."

Deciding that the American was now willing to hear what he had to say without protest, Kwong pocketed the automatic.

"For both your own safety and mine it has been necessary for me to withhold this knowledge from you until now. But you must understand at once that I have been for three years the slave—do you understand?—rather than the loyal

servant of Ivan Liebnitz. The suitcase you carried off the *Florence Dollar* contained over two thousand dollars' worth of opium, meant for the sole purpose of keeping me and certain other less fortunate slaves of this establishment in degraded subjection to the will of the Dictator. Do you begin to understand me?

"I say certain less fortunate slaves, because I am fortunate. A good physique, the product of American athletic training, and a horror of depravity gained in your country, have been the foundation for a struggle which, during the past six months, has all but cost me my life, but by which I have been able to free myself from the grip of opium and regain my normal decency. For six months I have play-acted in a truly masterful fashion. Ivan Liebnitz is now under the impression that I am taking opium at intervals of every four hours. I have deluded him magnificently, if I say so myself, by eating a pellet of pure charcoal every four hours during the entire period in the struggle to outplay him. He has eyes and ears that follow one every minute, but I believe I have won."

THE Chinese paused only long enough to regain his breath.

"Now let us come to your problem. For heaven's sake wake up! You are the victim of the most ludicrous delusion I have ever beheld. You are the most abject example of the power of suggestion that I have ever seen or heard of. Can't you understand now that you have been merely in a state of semi-hypnosis? That Ivan Liebnitz has hypnotized you? Gradually he closed the net around you. He is a master of the business. He has put, I dare say, a hundred men in the state which, if I had not interfered, you would now be reaching. In a week, under the constant tutelage of his tremendous will and brain, you would have been his for all time. Oh, he is diabolic; you need not question that! His use of every detail in accomplishing your mental subjugation is amazing. You remember the fragrance in your nostrils? The Dictator's use of that was positively stupendous. Its effect upon you was instantaneous. And do you know what that fragrance was? It was nothing more than a very pungent incense, with which you are not familiar, which is not in the least harmful, but only aids you in sleeping soundly when you are very tired and need rest. It has a slight effect on the eyes, making the vision a little distorted at first, but without harm, and both that and the fragrance disappear as soon as one has taken nourishment, as you will no doubt recall.

"And do you know why that incense was burned in your room? Do you know that 'little Jasmine Ears' —she did not mind that name, it amused her—was captivated by your treatment of her, since she has never known kindness to be shown her since the day Liebnitz stole her away from her palatial surroundings in Szechuan Province and brought her here as his pet? And her gratitude took the form of giving you peaceful sleep, which she knew you required. How splendidly the Dictator made use of that situation!

"He would never have sent the girl to you if he had not been quite confident that you would not keep her in your rooms. He does not make a single move without a complete orientation of the situation before he approaches it.

"Now listen closely to me. You are completely freed of his will! I brought you back to yourself by an injection in your arm of something quite salutary in emergencies—they

use it in hospitals—and by severe slaps against your cheeks and forehead. You are super-normal for the time being. Later you will be perfectly yourself. You must understand that we must go with the Dictator to the landing field. It is the only way; he is too clever to be evaded. You must understand that what he told you this evening is mainly true. His orders are being carried out explicitly with one exception. I garbled and forged orders in connection with the deaths of the twenty political and business men. They are safe. I, too, you see, have been awaiting the propitious hour. I have worked hand in hand with the Dictator, all toward a certain end, and *my* victory is at hand, I do confidently believe."

THE Chinese stopped long enough to examine his watch.

"We have only three minutes left. After the gong sounds we must both do the greatest bit of play-acting that has ever been done. You will not find it difficult to fall back into a semi-lethargic state. The injection will help you in that, for, though it has quickened you for the time being, it will later leave you in a drowsy state. I too have studied my plans carefully, you observe. But first—you must understand that, in almost every respect, the Dictator has told you the truth, for he believed that he had you under complete control.

"A vast army is approaching from Canton. Its officers are utterly loyal to Liebnitz, though its ranks are loyal to no one, as is the case with all Chinese armies at the present time. There are, as the Dictator has told you, eleven planes waiting at an appropriate distance from the city. The plan to bombard is intricately worked out, and the twenty fliers besides ourselves have their instructions. By daybreak, if Liebnitz's plans had not been so generously garbled by my own plotting, the city of Shanghai would be in partial ruin, and the foreigners in utter panic. You, as the Dictator insisted, are merely an instrument, a convenience in emergency, a short circuit on the line of official inquiry. Having been held by the Customs House for smuggling opium, your chance of disengaging yourself from the catastrophe would be negligible.

"We must hurry. The gong will sound in a moment. When we reach the landing field go about as though you were still under the Dictator's influence. Make a cursory examination of the planes. Act like a man determined to wipe out the city of Shanghai. Get into our plane. I shall not be in the pit. You will see me standing close to the Dictator. Then, just as he gives the order to take off, you are to leave the plane, come over to Liebnitz, utterly yourself, showing plainly that you are in no slightest degree under his control, and you will, unless I am greatly mistaken, witness a most amazing reversal of all that has happened so far. I am staking your life, my success, and the safety of all of Shanghai on a conviction which has grown out of almost two years of consistent research and experimentation. But you must trust me, for I assure you my conviction is based upon fact and not upon fancy."

Kwong stopped a moment, as though listening for the gong which he knew was about to sound.

"Watch the Dictator's eyes attentively when you come over to him. Remember, now he is entirely confident that his victory is at hand—the fruit of over twenty years of aspiring to become Emperor of China, of the Far East, and perhaps of the World . . .

"There is one thing which his pride, his egotism and his colossal self-confidence will not be able to withstand, and I am enemy enough of his to give him the biggest dose of that that I can manage to."

From a distance came the sound of a great gong being struck twice.

CHAPTER X

MADNESS

ARRIVING at the landing field, which they had reached by driving over Avenue Joffre and Hungjao Road and through a rather swampy, roadless section of possibly ten miles which seemed to be familiar to the chauffeur, though there were no signs that a motor had ever passed that way, Wolfton noticed that it was a great rough area which apparently had at one time been cultivated and subsequently deserted. At the extreme end, though he could not distinguish very clearly in the indistinct light of approaching dawn, was something which appeared to be a densely wooded section of land.

As they drove into it Wolfton caught sight of the wing of a plane which, as they drew nearer, looked more like a Handley-Page Hyderabad than anything his mind could readily substitute. Again he was astonished at the magnitude of the Dictator's resources. That the man should have at his command eleven planes of such indisputable excellence and cost was ostensible proof of his almost fabulous wealth. Now the American could clearly see that the planes were arrayed in a long line, and that there stood beneath each propeller four men in uniforms which he could not recognize.

The car stopped and Ivan Liebnitz got out, thrusting his bad leg before him as he slid to the ground. He accepted no assistance from his servants. Wolfton followed him.

Though he had found himself growing drowsy during the drive, Wolfton now felt fully alive with the approaching excitement, and he found it extremely difficult to play his required part. But in this he was fortunate, for the Dictator was too much occupied with the great malicious affair ahead to bother himself very much about a man whom he confidently believed to be his mental slave.

"There is not a minute to waste," Liebnitz declared to Kwong. He turned to the American. "You must make your inspection hurriedly, Colonel Wolfton, for in ten minutes you must be in the air. Look! Dawn is approaching. You must hurry as quickly as you are able."

The American immediately started in the direction of the planes. As he went, he could hear the Dictator giving Kwong further instructions in rapid, concise terms, his voice filled with a nervous exactness.

In another minute Wolfton heard Liebnitz calling him to come back.

"There is no more time to spare. You must take off immediately. It is not necessary to spend further time on inspection. According to the report of your pilots which you repeated to me last night, the planes are in good condition. You must start now!"

WOLFTON returned to the plane which Kwong had indicated as theirs. It was in the centre of the line, and he clambered in quickly. From where he sat he could see Kwong gesturing excitedly as he talked to the Dictator. It was evident that he was disclosing developments which disturbed his master a great deal, for, presently, Liebnitz called out again to Wolfton to come to him. The tone of his voice showed that he was frantically excited, and as the American ap-

proached he wondered again suddenly if perhaps he had put himself and his safety into more treacherous hands by following Kwong than he would have if he had remained under the command of Liebnitz.

But there was nothing for him to do now. If he had been duped by the Chinese, it was too late to mend his course. He drew close to the two who stood talking confusedly and loudly. Instinctively Wolfton kept his eyes averted from the Dictator's.

"Come here, Wolfton!" bellowed Liebnitz in furious tones. His agitation was manifestly too great for him to control. He shook nervously from head to foot. "Wolfton," he snarled, as the American drew near to him, "let me look into your eyes!"

For a moment, as the furious glare of the Dictator's eyes met his own, the American felt swamped in a turbulent sea of dizziness. He saw only two things clearly: the rapid motion of the Dictator's right hand toward his hip pocket, and the more alert and sure snatching with which Kwong caught the automatic from his master's hands and flung it far across the field. Then Wolfton's vision cleared and he jumped aside just in time to evade the sweep of the lame man's walking-stick. Kwong stood some ten feet from the Dictator, studying him intently, like a physician watching the face of a patient coming out of an anesthetic. Something he saw in the lame man's face appeared to give him confidence and, even more, great elation, and he approached a step closer.

"IVAN LIEBNITZ," said the Chinese in his most understandable English, "you are a rotten skunk!"

His words had the expected effect. The Dictator stood like one struck suddenly with a club. There was no more sign of life in him than in an image of stone.

"Ivan Liebnitz, this is Kwong talking to you. It is Kwong—but not the Kwong you know," the Chinese stated emphatically. "It is the real Kwong. It is the Kwong who has been free of your power for six long months, the Kwong who has studied you like a book and found you out, the Kwong who now openly defies you. That is who is talking to you!"

Released suddenly from the momentary shock, Ivan Liebnitz fell into a frenzy of gesticulation. He thrashed about with his stick wildly, beating the air in an attempt to reach the Chinese, whose agility in getting out of the way made the lame man ridiculous in his mad attempts. Presently, his strength being all but spent, he ceased striking. He broke the curve of the stick as he brought it crashing to the ground in a final effort to reach Kwong. Apparently he had forgotten the existence of Wolfton, who stood ready to help the Chinese if help were needed.

The Dictator's attempts at speech were futile. He could not utter a word, and Kwong took advantage of the silence afforded by the lame man's breathlessness.

"What would you say, Ivan Liebnitz," he cried—"what would you do, if you should be suddenly informed that the woods just behind us are filled with guns and men anxious to use them—British, French and American troopers posted here last night through the foresight of your loyal servant Kwong? What would you say? What would you do, Ivan Liebnitz? Look!" he cried in a loud, shrill voice as he put a whistle to his mouth and blew upon it three times.

The cessation of the shrill sound made the morning seem superlatively quiet for a few tense seconds. Almost immediately, from the trees behind the planes, came a volley aimed into the air, and before the rattle of the rifles had ceased a mass of armed infantrymen was seen dashing out of the wood.

THE Dictator was swaying from side to side. His helplessness was complete. Had he not been the man he was, had he not treated his slaves as brutally as he had, it would have been impossible for even as great an enemy as Kwong to take further advantage of his impotence, for he was infinitely pitiable. But Kwong was frenzied by his own strong emotions. He went on, piercingly, scourging his former master with words calculated to bring him to utter despair. It became apparent suddenly to Wolfton that the Chinaman was aiming at more than the mere crushing of the man's ambition and will.

The soldiers had surrounded the planes and were handcuffing the pilots and assistants.

"You see, Ivan Liebnitz, what your loyal servants are doing to you? If you were but aware of it, you would die on the spot to realize that you are without a single friend in China. Every one who has pledged himself to loyalty is against you. Yes, every one. You are stripped of everything. Nothing remains for you but death."

Kwong's voice was rising into a high pitch from excitement. His eyes showed that he felt himself conquering in some hidden battle which no outsider could understand. He came closer and closer to the Dictator, whose strength had left him so completely that in a sudden lurch he fell forward to the ground.

British officers were approaching, but Kwong did not cease for a moment with his invectives.

"Your palace is in flames. Your armies have deserted you. Every man you thought loyal is your enemy," he lied without conscience. "Your friends have become your enemies to death. You have lost your power over men. Look at the American. He is laughing at you. He is laughing at you, Ivan Liebnitz, for you are so weak and insignificant, and he was deluded into thinking you powerful.

"Look at him. He stands there quite calmly. In a few minutes he will go back to the city, where he will be greeted and apologized to by the officials who arrested him yesterday, and he will board the *President Pierce*, as he expected to do, and go about his own affairs, better off for an amusing experience, and with the delightful memory of a poor little man who dreamed that he would be Emperor of the World and found that he was not even emperor of himself."

As the officers drew near Kwong's voice became quieter and calmer. The Chinese knelt so as to make his last few words clear to the fallen Dictator but unheard by all others.

"The outraged whites are already beginning to invent hideous tortures for you, since you have betrayed all of them, and they have a ghastly death, a specially planned one, for you, Ivan Liebnitz."

AT this he ceased talking. Rising, he walked over to where the broken walking-stick lay, and, picking it up, returned to the prostrate figure. Protecting himself by keeping a safe distance, he poked, without any show of malice, at the body. But it did not respond.

Kwong looked up at Wolfton and the British captain who stood beside him. Seeing that they did not

know exactly what to do, he volunteered for a somewhat unpleasant detail. He rolled the body over on the back so that the face came into view. Then he stood up and addressed the captain.

"This is the man," he said simply.

The captain, an elderly Britisher, stout and bearded, wore the insignia of the Medical Corps. He said nothing, and leaned down over the body before him.

Wolfton, studying the face of the Dictator closely for the first time now, noticed that a curious foam-like substance had gathered along the unconscious man's lips. He was about to comment upon it when he heard the deep voice of the captain explaining:

"It is quite obvious that some terrific shock has turned the man completely mad. It is questionable whether he will regain consciousness enough to stand for some time to come, for which we may be thankful, since it will be far more comfortable for everyone concerned if he is in a strait-jacket before he begins his antics."

He looked around for a subordinate.

"However that may be, I'm taking no liberties with pure luck," he said, and gave directions to a sergeant to call the stretcher-bearers.

CHAPTER XI

THE NEW DICTATOR

ON the way back to Shanghai, riding in the ex-Dictator's private car, Kwong made, among others, two observations which Wolfton never forgot. One was in the way of a boast, the other a warning.

"I believe," he said, and a quiet self-commendation played in his eyes as he uttered the words, "that I have rid China and the world of a demon, and I believe that I have effected the removal in as clever and just and certain a way as could have been conceived."

It was a little later that he leaned quite close to the American and said, almost in a whisper:

"Because I respect you and have nothing against you, I shall tell you that, while I worked to overturn Ivan Liebnitz, I was not asleep to my own possibilities. Of course you realize that some one must carry on the work where the old dictator has been forced to leave it unfinished. And, you see, for one who has had three years of training in the black arts of which Liebnitz was past master, it is not impossible to effect a transfer of all that good loyalty he achieved, over a period of twenty years, among influential men. Armies must have a chief, otherwise they do more mischief than good. It is, in a way, my moral obligation to assume the command which Liebnitz is now incapable of assuming."

The Chinese looked intently at the American.

"Briefly," he continued, "the name of the new Dictator is Kwong, Charles Kwong, the gentleman sitting here beside you. And his policy, Mr. Wolfton, though in no way as sinister as that of the former Dictator, corresponds in one particular: Foreigners are not wanted, especially stupid ones. You understand, Mr. Wolfton?"

He smiled courteously.

"I shall take great pains to help foreigners to find suitable and comfortable means of taking their departure. For you, Mr. Wolfton, the matter is quite simple, of course, since the *President Pierce*, on which you have a stateroom, is at this minute in the Whangpoo River, and its sailing hour is precisely eleven-thirty. That is to say, Mr. Wolfton, in exactly three hours and twenty minutes."

The top card was turned—it was the ace of spades.

Rawhide Reese

By PAUL SAND

Rawhide Reese was a hard-boiled egg—but a wistful smile and a pair of trusting eyes softened him.

SPEAKING of hard-boiled eggs, did you ever hear of "Rawhide" Reese?

I had the uneasy pleasure of meeting him when he first landed in Grand Eagle. I was worn out hunting a new job, and I wanted to try Grand Eagle's brand of excitement, to forget how God-forsaken things were at Bar-Q.

The dude up east that had bought the place must have thought a cow ranch could run itself. As far as I could make out, he spent his time running off to such places as South America and East Africa and so on. Jim Gray, the foreman, had got disgusted and quit on him. While there had been rumor of somebody being sent to take his place, nobody had come and things had gone from bad to worse. As a final straw to discipline and efficiency, the dude's sister had been parking on us for a month. But more about that later.

I didn't have any money (there wasn't any at Bar-Q), so I had to go to the Longhorn, where I had a little personal credit with Sam Malone, who tended bar. It was in the Longhorn that I first saw Rawhide. I hadn't been watching the gambling five minutes before I noticed a lean, rangy man near me, also looking on. He was dressed like any other cowman ready for business, but there

was a limber toughness in the set of his shoulders and the crisp way he stood that somehow attracted me.

I fell to watching him more than I did the betting. I tried to figure out what it was about him that appealed to me. His face was a dull burnt-orange, as if it might have been stained with walnut juice. It was a narrow face, with a long, thin, beak-like nose and a pointed chin that spread back triangularly to lumpy, gristly joints below the ears. His eyes were dark and sunken, and in them shone the yellow glint of the lamps.

The leathery muscles of his face lay tight, framing a thin slit of a mouth. No one feature would have drawn a second look, but there was a general impression of strength and alertness and push that fascinated me.

I SUPPOSE I had been in the Longhorn less than half an hour when the shooting occurred. "Gum-ball" Murdock, a hard-drinking, easy-shooting buckaroo that had punched cows for almost every outfit in the county, was having a run of bad luck. Being human, he was hunting for some scientific reason for it, and he spotted a quiet, shrewd-looking gent who had been standing behind his chair. To make matters worse, this tall stranger seemed to be amused, in his quiet way, at Gum-ball's habit of coming out second-best—an expensive honor at poker.

Gum-ball made a remark that made us all prick up our ears and that brought a look into the stranger's eyes that was neither quiet nor amused. He barked something in return; and when Gum-ball came back with details that wore teeth, he reached for his gun.

But Gum-ball was notorious for his speed on the draw, drunk or sober or half-way. The stranger never fired. Gum-ball dropped him with one shot—a lucky shot, you may say, considering what Gum-ball had under his belt; but it finished the stranger and began the surprising part of the story.

The body on the floor had a suddenly sobering effect on Gum-ball. He turned and glowered at the crowd, his gun still leveled. Then, with a quick motion, he snatched open the back door of the saloon and ducked out, slamming the door behind him.

THE crowd was reluctant to do anything about it. The dead man was a stranger, and nobody in particular was vitally interested. Gum-ball could easily be found if anybody really wanted him.

Sam came out from behind the bar, wiping his hands on his apron, and stared at the body as if trying to decide what he ought to do.

The tall, grim, dark-skinned man whom I had previously observed stood frowning—less at the killing, it seemed to me, than at the fact that the crowd sat around like a herd of sick sheep.

"Who was that canary?" he asked me, jerking his head toward the back door.

I gave him a thumb-nail sketch of Gum-ball.

"Who's the other bird?"

"Stranger to me," I answered, following him as he stepped past me to the body.

He stood towering above the gaping gamblers, his arms akimbo, and looked around impatiently.

"Don't nobody know him?" he snapped.

Though a stranger himself, he took the lead as naturally and instinctively as if he'd lived in Grand Eagle all his life. He glared scornfully at their blank faces. Some of them looked ashamed and began

scratching their heads as if they'd like to help if they could.

"Say," suggested one, glad to have an idea, "you know what? Looks somethin' like this feller McKendree — Buck McKendree — that held up the bank down in Piquo City."

"That feller! You sure?"

"No, not plumb sure; but they say he was a rangy, light-complected feller jest like this 'un," pointed out the man.

"Maybe," nodded the master of ceremonies slowly. "But here," he added, straightening up. "He can't lie here all night. Got a spare room you can lay him out in?" he asked the bartender.

"We can put him in here," said Sam, opening a side door at the rear end of the bar.

"That's all right."

Sam and I helped him carry the body into a cubby-hole that served as stock-room, office and bedroom. The place smelt strong and sweet of tobacco; and when Sam lit a lamp I saw boxes of cigars and smoking and chewing tobacco. On a small table were a mess of papers and tally-books, a bottle of ink and a couple of pens.

We laid the dead man out on the bunk and stopped his wound.

"Go get the sheriff," our self-constituted boss told me. "But say! Wait a minute," he added, calling me back.

He closed the door and looked sharply at me and Sam.

"I ain't sure," he said, "that this here is Buck McKendree; but if it is, there must be a reward out for him."

"There is," Sam informed him. "I ain't certain how much. Twelve hundred dollars, I b'lieve."

A smile warped the thin, hard mouth.

"In that case, boys, just remember this feller is my prisoner. I may have to jockey the sheriff a little when he comes. You boys keep your fingers out, an' you'll both get a bite."

I couldn't see that I had any claim to the reward, and I wasn't inclined to dispute this sharp-eyed stranger. Sam felt the same way.

I FOUND the sheriff, Jim McDonogh, at the Eagle's Feather saloon.

"We got a feller up at the Longhorn," I told him, "that we think is Buck McKendree, the bank robber."

The sheriff's watery eyes blinked. He spat out a quid of tobacco and wiped his stained, gray, stringy mustache with the back of his hand.

"Got him tied up?"

"No. He's dead."

"Oh!" grunted the officer, pulling on his black coat from the back of his chair. "Who killed him?"

"Gum-ball Murdock."

"Gum-ball, eh?" he mused speculatively, as we walked down the street to the Longhorn. "Where is the feller?" he added as we entered the saloon.

"He's layin' in that room back o' the bar." As I pointed, the door opened and the shrewd, eagle-eyed stranger looked out.

"In here, Sheriff," he directed.

He ordered the sheriff around, it seemed, just as naturally as he did the rest of us. There was no hint in his voice that he was turning everything over, now that the regular authorities had arrived.

He motioned me inside and called Sam with a jerk of his head.

"There he is, Sheriff. You can move him off or leave him here as you like. All I want's a receipt for him."

The sheriff turned his eyes from

the dead man to cast a swift look up at the stranger.

"Where's Gum-ball?" he asked.

"The feller what shot him? He run off."

"What do you want a receipt for?"

"Because this here is Buck McKendree, that robbed the bank in Piquo City. Ain't there a reward out for him?"

The sheriff ignored the question of the reward.

"You sure it's McKendree?"

"O' course I'm sure!" lied the other man, scowling. "Don't he fit all the points in the write-up? Tall, light-complected, an' so on?"

The sheriff reached over and opened the dead man's shirt.

"Where's he hit?"

"Not there," sneered the stranger. "Don't you see where the blood is, an' where we slit the shirt up the side? Oh," he added, "maybe you was lookin' for scars or tattoo marks or somethin'?"

"That's right," remarked Sam. "I recollect now the notice said somethin' about tattoo marks. 'Two crossed guns tattooed on chest.'"

All three of us leaned over to see what the sheriff had been hunting. Two six-guns, crossed on each other, were traced in blue on the man's chest. The design was a little lop-sided and blurry, but it certainly fitted the description. The sheriff pulled at his mustache sheepishly.

HE went through the man's pockets and found cigarette papers, a sack of tobacco, a jack-knife, some twine and matches. An old leather purse had in it eighty dollars in gold and some change. The only real find was not in the pockets. Around his waist underneath his pants was a money-belt containing more banknotes than I ever saw outside a bank: nice, new, crisp tens, twenties and fifties.

The sheriff grunted. He counted thirty-two hundred dollars.

"How much did this McKendree get out o' the bank?" asked the tall man.

"Somethin' like twenty thousand dollars," admitted the sheriff.

"Maybe he's got another belt."

We looked for one, and we ripped the seams of his clothes. Finally we had to come to the conclusion that he had cached it.

"Well," said the stranger, coming back to his side of the matter again, "you can put that eighty and that thirty-two hundred in the receipt, too."

It was as plain as day that the sheriff did not think much of giving receipts in this case.

"You a law officer?" he demanded of the tall man.

"No. What of it?"

"An' you say you didn't shoot this feller?"

"No."

"You wasn't even after him—jest happened to be here after he was killed an' kinda thought it was maybe McKendree!"

"Thought hell!" roared the tall man. "Didn't I tell you it was him the minute you come in here?"

"But I don't see what you got to do with it. Who are you, anyhow?"

"My name's Reese," the stranger informed him. "I'm on my way to the Bar-Q ranch. I'm the new foreman."

LORD-E-O! You could have floored me right then with a wisp of hay! Bar-Q's new boss! I saw in a flash that Bar-Q was going to see something interesting—and I felt like patting myself on the back for not being fool enough to try to horn in on the newcomer's claim to the reward.

As you can easily believe, I began to size him up more closely. He had all the ear-marks of a driver and no mistake! I pictured "Sleepy" Morrison and "Red-Eye" Pete and "Duke" Henry and the rest of the boys when they got their first taste of this Reese man! Especially Duke, whose chief and sole occupation had been to hang around Miss Myrtle, the owner's sister. I could judge about how long that would last with this hombre in charge. Of course, I had been getting to be almost as bad as the rest of them, sitting around letting things go to pot; but I didn't enjoy it. Old "Pop" Gilmore, who had been straw boss since Gray quit, was a pretty good old soul; but he liked his liquor and his bunk too well to make anybody toe the line. I could hardly stand it any longer. I had tried to get work at all the good outfits around, but they weren't taking on anybody extra at that time of the summer.

"Bar-Q?" murmured the sheriff.

The tall man nodded curtly, the taut muscles of his jaw twitching.

The sheriff noticed that his hand rested not far from his gun.

"Maybe we could fix up some arrangement," he suggested.

"Now look a-here, old timer," cut in the other with a brittle congeniality, "you seem to think I didn't have nothin' to do with catchin' this feller, but you might as well come from under the rug an' admit you had less'n nothin'! I ain't a hog, though. If you'll quit glummin' about it, I'll give you a chance for it. We'll draw cards—winner take all."

"Couldn't we jest split?"

"Oh, the devil with choppin' it up! Let somebody deal. The man that gets the first ace gets it all."

"Who gets the first card?"

"I do. I was here first."

While the sheriff hesitated I picked up a deck and shuffled it. I placed it on the bar and each man cut. Without lifting the deck, I turned the top card toward my new boss. It was the ace of spades!

He laughed.

"Well, boys, the drinks are on me. You earned your slice," he went on to me, as we helped him celebrate. "It'll have to be a good, juicy one! Where do you hang out?"

"Bar-Q."

"Bar-Q!" he echoed. He frowned at first as if I'd been trying to hide it from him all this time; then he laughed. "Ain't that a queer cut? You're a Bar-Q boy! You heard me say I was the new foreman, didn't you?"

"Yep. We been expectin' one for quite a spell. Need one bad."

"Do, eh?" he said with a twisty smile. "Maybe I can fill the bill. I was figgerin' on findin' my way out to-morrow, but seein' as you're here, I'll trail right along with you to-night."

We reached the ranch about midnight, and by some miracle everybody had turned in; but the bunkhouse reeked of corn whisky and tequila. He said nothing—picked out an empty bunk and turned in.

IF I had let things run their usual course, it would have been worse than it actually was. I sneaked in to Coco, the cook, and warned him that breakfast had better be a little earlier than the tourist hours it had slipped into. At that, the new foreman was up with the first streak of dawn, looking things over.

After breakfast, which was awkward and uneasy, due to the ominous silence, he turned over a letter from Mr. Haws, the owner, to Miss Myrtle and Pop Gilmore, stating that this was Mr. John B. Reese, who had been engaged as foreman of Bar-Q, the said John Reese having had

long experience at the Cross-U ranch in Locust County, and being undoubtedly the very man for the position, and so on.

MISS MYRTLE HAWS lived alone in the newer ranch-house, which contained an office, living-room, partitioned sleeping quarters, and a wide veranda. She was up quick when Coco knocked and told her the new foreman had arrived.

She came out on the veranda in her nattiest riding clothes: khaki breeches, cordovan boots, and a shirt of some brown, shiny stuff, with a tie fastened by a pin shaped like a buggy-whip. She was pretty tall for a girl and had a creamy complexion, snapping brown eyes that weren't afraid to look at you, thin, straight eyebrows, and dark, mahogany-colored hair that she fixed close.

Her hair and eyebrows struck you as kind of freakish at first, but they gave her a mysterious, big-town look that made you curious to talk to her; and when you once heard the rich, man-to-man voice she had, it was hard to take your eyes off her, whether you knew why or not.

The first thing she told the new foreman was that she had not expected one so young, or at least so young-looking, for the responsible position of foreman. He took this standing up, without blinking more than once, and got down to business, which was chiefly finding out where she stood in the running of the ranch. She assured him that he was complete boss, just as the others had been, as far as she was concerned. She was merely an incidental guest. She would even leave, if he said so.

Now properly in office, the new foreman entered upon his duties with no more delay.

He began by lining us all up and telling us in choice, blistering language what he thought of us as an outfit. His words snapped like a whip. Judging by the looks, we were the sloppiest, mangiest, tail-draggledest excuse for a ranch he had ever heard tell of. And he claimed to be real skeptical that we were any better than we looked. He would soon find out.

The first thing he was going to do was to look over as much of the range as he could get over in one day. He ordered all hands, except Coco, to go along.

After we had torn off twenty miles I knew that the condition of the range was less in his mind than the condition of the bunk-house the night before. Sleepy and Red-Eye, flushed and stone white by turns, were wearying in their saddles, and blister-like beads of sweat stood out on them almost as fast as they wiped their faces.

We lost the two of them. We laid them, minus breakfast, in the best shade we could find.

"You'll be over your jag soon," prophesied the foreman, giving us their horses to lead. "A nice walk home will fix you up in good shape."

I looked for Duke Henry to quit, too—before I noticed he wasn't along. I wondered about this, but was too preoccupied to give it much thought. I was glad I had not hit the booze the way some of them had. I lasted through the day, but was just as glad it was over. The new foreman came in as dry as leather. He had been christened. Two miles out Red Eye had talked about "Rawhide." He had invented it as a jeer; he had sweated until it was a curse; by nightfall it was a household name.

WHEN we dragged back to the ranch it did not cheer us up to find Duke Henry lounging in the

bunk-house. He removed the cigarette from his mouth long enough to curl a supercilious smile at our dust and sweat.

We sweated some more at the sight of him. He had dodged the trip to take Miss Myrtle out riding. We hoped Rawhide would have noticed his absence, and expected fireworks; but none came—until the next morning.

"Who is that milk-faced, hare-lipped actor with the silk sash and jingle-bobs?" demanded Rawhide after breakfast.

We told him, controlling our eagerness pretty well under the circumstances.

"Where was he yestiddy?"

We shrugged, wondering whether it would be fairer to speak or not to speak.

"Reckon Miss Myrtle ast him to take her ridin'," mumbled Pop Gilmore.

Rawhide rode over to where Duke was waiting outside the veranda for another nice day off.

"You belong to this outfit?" he asked.

"Sure I do," returned Duke.

"Where was you all day yestiddy?"

"Right here," sneered Duke.

"Didja hear me say everybody was goin' along?"

"But——"

"But hell!" interrupted Rawhide. "Yes or no?"

"Yes, but——"

"Why warn't you there?"

Duke's pale face was almost white now. He tried a favorite trick of his: rolled a cigarette before he bothered answering. But his fingers shook. He dropped the paper and tobacco, and replied just before Rawhide's patience gave out.

"Miss Myrtle asked—Miss Myrtle ordered me to go out riding with her."

"Miss Myrtle's orders go through me," snapped the foreman, "when she gives any. Get over there to the bunkhouse before I kick you over!"

Myrtle Haws came out on the veranda and Duke recovered some of his lost assurance. He stayed where he was and smirked almost openly at Rawhide. He was confident the lady would stand by him, and she did.

"I'm sorry, Mr. Reese," she said. "I did ask Duke to bring my horse around."

"An' he lost a whole day's work," remarked Rawhide. "I could have anybody — the cook — saddle your horse for you."

"But Duke has been acting as my escort. You wouldn't advise me to ride alone? It isn't quite safe."

"You'd be jest as safe with Coco. You see, Miss, there's so much work to get done that I'll need all the reg'lar hands for quite a spell, specially the top hands," he added sarcastically, "like Duke here. He's been loungin' in the lap o' luxury so long he needs to get out with the real men an' do a little work."

Duke flushed at this, but even more at the light laugh the girl gave, as if there were something funny about it. His lip curled and he rode up to Rawhide, eye to eye. The closer he got, the more he had to look up and the less eye to eye it was.

"Don't try to rawhide me!" he spit out. "You can get away with this hard-guy stuff with stews like Sleepy an' Red-Eye, but you—you——"

Duke's words came fast until he stalled, and those on this side of him could see that his hand was right near his gun.

Rawhide's face lost its fire—it turned icy.

"Get down to the bunkhouse!" he

clicked, his lips hardly moving. "I never been noted for patience!"

Duke didn't move. "When I—" he began.

Rawhide's arm snapped out like a whip. The back of his hand struck Duke squarely in the mouth. It must have stung like a bull-whack!

Duke jerked back, his pony side-stepping. He seized his gun savagely.

Rawhide's gun cracked first, and Duke's decided not to. It fell to the ground as Duke grabbed his bloody wrist. Duke was so pale he was actually greenish!

"Get out o' here!" barked Rawhide. "Before I get mad. Get out an' stay out! If I ever catch you back here again, I'll cut up your gizzard for rat-bait!"

RAWHIDE had no more problems of discipline. We worked like slaves from dawn till long after sundown. We had what was really a private little mid-summer round-up of our own, chasing after cows from here to Jericho! Sleepy woke up, and Red-Eye was sober for two weeks running. There was grumbling, of course: a man can't put on extra steam without a little self-expression. We had grumbling, but we had decent food and spending money. (I still think Rawhide sold a bunch of cows on his own to get the necessary cash.) We had the feeling of getting somewhere. And we had a boss we liked to brag about!

If you think, as we thought, that the run-in with Duke Henry got Rawhide at sixes and sevens with Miss Myrtle, you are just as wrong as we were. She seemed just as well satisfied with life as ever, and with Rawhide, too. As long as he had won his point, he sent her the best ladies' man we had for her rides. He even rode with her himself.

It didn't take us long to see that he would have liked to do all of her entertainment and protection, but there was too much work to be done for that. The fact that the foreman's bunk was in the ranch-house made it easy and natural for him to spend the evenings on the veranda with Myrtle. It successfully discouraged any of us ordinary buckaroos from hanging around!

ONE evening a cowboy drifted in looking for work. At my second glance I saw it was Gum-ball Murdock, the fellow who had done the shooting that night in the Longhorn. We had lost Duke, but everything was organized among the bunch we had. Rawhide would have had little use for him regardless of his reputation as a misfit and the fact that the sheriff might get ambitious any time and lock him up.

Gum-ball got peeved about it.

"How come you can't give me a job when you got twelve hundred dollars o' my money?" he complained to Rawhide.

"Twelve hundred dollars of your money?"

"Sure! Didn't I get that stick-up feller? An' then you come along an' grab what's comin' to me!"

Rawhide laughed a hard, scornful laugh.

"Go bag your head, cowboy!" he advised. "Next time you hold a winning hand stay—don't drop! Besides, I ain't got it, an' there's always a chance they'll back down. They didn't get much o' their lost cash back, an' that makes 'em hate like the dickens to pay up!"

"Maybe I'll get it yet!" leered Gum-ball.

"Don't try it, son!" warned Raw-

hide. "I got a long reach, an' I got sentimental reasons for wantin' that money."

THE next evening I got a pretty clear notion of what he meant by sentimental reasons for wanting the money. I had been to town for grub and supplies, and went up to the office to explain to Rawhide about some latigo straps. Nobody was around. I figured he and Miss Myrtle were out riding again. I was tired, so I slumped down in the rocker in the office to wait.

When I woke up it was almost dark. What roused me was Rawhide's voice from the veranda. He wasn't talking loud and he wasn't talking to me. He was speaking to Miss Myrtle, who stood facing him, fingering her sombrero.

"I ain't rich," he was saying, "but I reckon I could go after money an' get it, if that's what bothers you."

"It isn't that," she replied. "I'm not so spoilt on money. And I—I admire you for your strength, for the sure way you make men and cattle and everything do what you want. You—you're masterful, but——"

"Too much that way, mebbe, eh? Kind o' hard the way I do business? I reckon I do cuss a lot, and I ain't none too gentle when I get sore. They got a nice name for me around here!"

"No, it's not that," she denied. "I consider 'Rawhide' a compliment. Of course, I'd rather not hear the swearing. Maybe that's it. I'm so used to thinking of men that swear and—and—of men like you as not just rough, but—but 'shady' and dishonest and——"

Even in the dimness I could see Rawhide's shoulders tighten. His voice came sharp.

"What makes you think I ain't honest?" he demanded. "Has some o' the boys been handin' out any loose talk?"

"The boys?" she repeated. "Of course not."

I thought of the cows that had been run over into Union County, but that had looked honest enough to me, taking things broadly.

She was looking him square in the eye now, searching him, as he stood dumbly wondering why he had ever suggested that there might be any loose talk.

"John," she said softly, "if I could be convinced through and through that you were absolutely square, I think I could—I think I'd fall at your feet!"

I could hear him draw in his breath.

"Myrtle, that's a promise!" He stretched out his long, lean, wiry hand. "I don't know how I can ever prove it to you, but by the Lord, I'm goin' to try!"

"Maybe I'll be able to see it in your eyes," she returned.

As she left him, he turned toward the office. There was no chance for me to duck. With my heart pounding, I could only flop my head over and snore quietly. At that, he didn't see me until he had lit a lantern. Then I felt his stare for a whole minute, it seemed, before he kicked my leg.

"Gosh!" I gasped. "Did I fall asleep?"

He grunted.

"It's a hot night," I said, wiping my face. "I come up to see you about them latigo straps."

"Go in to-morrow an' get 'em at Bradshaw's," he snapped. "That feller Higgins is a known crook. He rustles half that stuff he sells!"

So the next day I went back to town to dicker more expensively but more honestly.

I ran into the sheriff, talking to a big, broad, elderly man in a store suit, and he stopped me.

"This here is Mr. Donaldson," he told me, "from Piquo City. He come up to pay the reward for Buck McKendree, that outlaw that stuck up his bank."

"Oh, yeah," I nodded. "Rawhide —Mr. Reese has been kinda expectin' a check for some time."

"In a matter of that kind," said the big man, his face wrinkling into a good-natured smile, "it's always our policy to pay the money personally."

"Sure," I said. "If you're ready, I can take you right out now in the spring wagon."

"Good!"

MR. DONALDSON was an interesting talker. He was an old timer, but mighty up-to-date. He wanted to know all about the range conditions, how many cattle we figured for fall, how was Mr. Reese getting on with the ranch, whether the fellow that actually did the shooting had ever been heard of. If we hadn't been so busy swapping conversation, we shouldn't have been so surprised when two fellows hopped out on us with their guns.

Jerusalem! We looked foolish if we looked like we felt!

They stripped off our ironwear (Mr. Donaldson had a gun under his coat) and made us get out of the wagon, so they could run the team off. They had bandannas tied across their faces, but they did not fool me. I knew Gum-ball Murdock as soon as I saw him; but the other fellow, who I knew looked familiar, had me puzzled till I realized it was Duke Henry. He had taken off some of the fancy trimmings for the occasion, but it was the same Duke!

They must have known that this Mr. Donaldson was bringing the reward money, for they cleaned him out of everything he had first, and then knocked him out with the butt of a revolver. I saw mine coming, too; there was no dodging it. I cursed the day Rawhide had not sent his bullet through Duke's cowardly heart!

I came back to life with a splitting headache. Mr. Donaldson was still unconscious, but he seemed all right otherwise. The wagon was about half a mile away. By the time I drove back with it to get Mr. Donaldson, he was sitting up, nursing his head.

WE ALMOST broke a whiffle-tree getting back to the ranch, which was only a mile or so farther. Rawhide was in the office. We burst in on him so suddenly that he pulled his gun on us!

I told him what had happened, but he seemed hardly to be listening. He stood staring at Mr. Donaldson, still holding his gun on him as if the old gentleman might eat him up.

"Did you actually bring the twelve hundred dollars?" Rawhide asked, disregarding me.

"No, I didn't," answered the banker. "I wanted to investigate before I paid it."

"You mean," I broke out, "that you didn't have the twelve hundred on you when those fellers held us up?"

"No. I'm glad I didn't. I had about thirty dollars."

I snickered. "To think o' those birds——"

"Jest let me get a word in, Steve," scowled Rawhide. "What made you so suspicious, Mr. Donaldson?"

"Nothing. I wasn't suspicious."

"It wasn't the tattoo marks inked on his chest?"

"No," admitted the banker. "I never questioned them. Careless, I reckon."

The corners of Rawhide's mouth tightened into a hard smile.

"Anyhow," he said, "the game is up now. You come at a bad time for me, Mr. Donaldson. Since I saw you last, something has happened to me."

"Yes? Your health looks good."

"My health's all right one way," admitted Rawhide. "But here at Bar-Q I met the finest woman that ever made a man want to be somebody. She's got good family, real genuine refinement, everything. An' she likes me pretty good, too. I asked her to marry me. I know I had no call to do it, but I did."

He paused before he went on.

"Well, she come right out with it. It wasn't that I was poor, which I was, far as she knew. It wasn't that my folks was God knows where. It wasn't that I was jest nachelly tough, either! It was because I didn't strike her as being *straight!*"

Rawhide's face was like a mask, but his eyes were like fire.

"She don't know a thing, Mr. Donaldson. If she did, she prob'ly wouldn't look at me. It was jest her hunch—a hunch that read me like a book! I couldn't see any way out. I thought I had one almost figgered out, but that blew up when you walked in an' I saw you knew. If I hadn't been such a fool as to be tickled with the idea o' gettin' the reward for the capture of Buck McKendree, you would never have showed up, prob'ly, and I could ha' squared things, an' you none the wiser."

"I don't understand—quite," said the banker.

"Well, it's too late for that now," jerked Rawhide. "I sure hate to leave Bar-Q for more than one reason, but I reckon it can't be helped. Before I go, I want to tell you that the rest o' your money—every dollar of it—is in the little oilskin wrapper you'll find buried directly under my bunk. It's yours: take it. Myrtle Haws has done that much for me. Now, Steve, tie up Mr. Donaldson. I reckon I can fix you then, an' get a few minutes' start. No funny business now!" he rapped sharply.

"Just a minute," protested the banker. "Let's not hurry this thing too much, Mr.—ah—Reese. Do I understand that all the bank's money is being returned to me?"

"Every last dollar!"

"Then I don't see why you should give up your position here. A man smart enough to deliver Buck McKendree and locate his swag in the bargain is just the man I would think is needed to boss this outfit. You can take it from me: I'm perfectly satisfied that Buck McKendree, the bank robber, is dead."

Rawhide bit his lip as his eyes narrowed on the bland, smiling old gentleman.

"Mr. Donaldson, if I could take your word of honor——"

"In my business, Mr. Reese," said the banker, "we have to size men up pretty accurately. I give you my word of honor. And I think a man lookin' forward to gettin' married would be just the man to get a twelve-hundred-dollar reward!"

"Mr. Donaldson," said Rawhide slowly, extending his long, lean hand, "I trust you. But don't send me no reward. I don't want it."

I REMEMBER bringing the first letter to Miss Myrtle under her new name.

"Mrs. John B. Reese," I said, grinning.

She blushed. "What in the world can it be?" she frowned. "I can't think of any one I know in Piquo City."

She opened it, and I saw a large, apple-green check flutter out.

"Why, it's the reward!" she exclaimed, turning to Rawhide. "I thought you told them you wouldn't take it because you really didn't capture that outlaw? Of course, the 'Mrs.' is just a slip—they must have stuck an 's' onto the 'Mr.' by mistake."

"Maybe it's one of that Mr. Donaldson's little jokes," muttered Rawhide. "What's it say?"

"'To Mrs. John B. Reese, for the capture of Buck McKendree. Twelve Hundred Dollars.'"

"Survival of the Fittest"

THERE were few weaklings among the Mound Builders, a strong and handsome race that lived in Arkansas during the primitive ages. They were, on the whole, so robust and brave that they had little or no tolerance for the weaklings.

The malformed, the blind, the criminal and the idiotic were therefore hopelessly doomed, and once every five years these unfortunates were assembled for a journey which they well knew to be their last.

It is a well-known fact that among the highly civilized races it often happens that the cleverest and most useful men and women, the greatest artists and inventors, diplomats and scientists, have been culled from the ranks of invalidism; yet, among races that depend upon purely physical exercise for work and sport and that do not lay stress upon the higher functions of the brain, there is but one standard of excellence—perfection of the body.

So in the old days in the Stone Country, in Arkansas, when the five-year period came around once more, the priests and chiefs assembled all of those whom they deemed unfit to become fathers and mothers of their future races.

These unhappy cripples were led along a long, dark road which was so over-burdened with dense vegetation that the way was made doubly hard and gave them some inkling of the hardship and desolation which was to come.

Under the guidance of the priests they would pick their way up the slope leading to the cave which was their destination—limping, groping, wheezing—and at sunset those who could see took their last look at the beautiful world they had been forced to leave.

There were fires in the cave, which were kept constantly alive by the priests. And, one by one, the cripples were led into the cave, never to return to the world of their loved ones.

The floor of this cave was strewn with human dust—into which these newcomers would sink up to their knees—an insidious reminder of the hideous fate which lay in store for them.

He found himself rising to his feet, moving toward the door.

Communion

By LOUISE PLATT HAUCK

Did Dick Perry's body actually release its hold on him for a moment, or was it only that his mind grasped the situation in a wholly natural way? The spirit of Marge—dear, impetuous Marge—seemed to him to be calling, to be trying to tell him the news that would bring him happiness and some measure of solace. And Dick tried frantically to communicate with his beloved, till at last he understood the thing that he felt she wanted him to know.

HE PULLED out his watch in the hall. Seven o'clock. Only four hours ago Marge had been alive, joyously telephoning from the house.

"Dickie, I've some news for you! The most wonderful news in the world! I can't wait to tell you—I'm coming right down, and you're to come home with me. Oh, Dickie, I'm so happy!"

He had smiled as he hung up the receiver. It was so exactly like Marge to want to tell him at once. No joy was ever quite perfect to her until she had shared it with him. If a friend in Ireland sent her the linen she wished for: if the regal lilies in her garden bloomed earlier than she had expected; if one of her shopgirl protégées received promotion, Marge could never wait until he got home to tell him about it. His desk telephone brought him the news. The fact that this time she wanted to tell him in person marked the occasion as of unusual importance.

But she had never told her news. Whether excitement had made her careless or the car had skidded on the freshly oiled road, they never

knew. She was dead when he reached the hospital, her lips folded close on the tidings she had come to bring him.

ON THE threshold of the living-room he paused to steel himself against a shock. The living-room without Margie!

But, after all, it wasn't bad. Things looked much the same as usual, except for a vague air of disorder in that usually orderly room. The magazine he had been reading the evening before lay sprawled by the side of his chair. Marge's music littered the piano, mutely recalling the happy hour when she had tried over some new songs for him. The pillows of the big couch where they had sat, lover-like, for a few minutes after dinner were huddled at one end, and the Persian rug was still awry from her careless foot. Evidently Marge had not spent her usual half-hour here in the morning, changing the flowers, straightening the books on the low shelves, putting the little touches to the pleasant room which she would not leave to Mary.

He went up the shallow oak steps and paused with his hand on the knob of a door. This was going to be bad—damn' bad. . . . Marge's room. . . .

It was very bad. From the half-open closet door came a gay beckoning of Marge's pretty frocks. On her dressing-table was the mirror which had reflected her face, were the silver and ivory trifles which had been warmed in her hands. They twinkled at him appealingly. He had the oddest feeling that the room was demanding of him her return; demanding at least an explanation of her absence. In the curve of the big corner window her willow chair held out accusing arms to him.

The same atmosphere of vague disorder prevailed here as downstairs. Marge must have dressed in a hurry. How queer! Marge—her living self—had been in that room since he had been, and now she would never enter it again. She had hurried out of it, radiant with happiness, and her quick footsteps had borne her away from it forever. A dull wonder as to the import of Marge's news crossed his mind. What had Marge wanted to tell him?

The blue wrapper thing she sometimes wore was flung over the foot of one of the beds. Her slippers — yes, under the bed, their little, scuffed, blue toes turned reproachfully toward him. It was all so exactly as he had seen it times without number that he slipped easily into his usual mental attitude in that room. In just a minute Marge would step out from the closet, her frock pulled half over her head in her impatience to tell him—well, whatever it was she had been so eager to for him to know.

Damn' bad. Marge would hate to have it so bad. She'd run into his arms with the crazy little rush which had lasted over from their honeymoon and say—Marge 'd say:

"Why, Dickie, what's the matter? What's making you look like this? Stop it! Turn up the corners of your mouth this instant—you don't look pretty that way. Dead? *I, dead?* What utter nonsense! Don't you feel my cheek against your old scratchy one? Don't you feel my arms around your neck? Well, then! Just wait till you hear my news — my wonderful, glorious news!"

And she'd smile — that darned little one-sided smile that used to come between him and his abstracts

when they were first married. Nobody ever had a smile like Marge's. He'd hoped, shyly, that if they had a boy he'd have her smile. Marge's smile and his own stalwart inches. The Perrys were all large men. He'd have liked his son to be tall. Of course, that meant a gangling, long-legged boyhood, as his own had been; an awkward boyhood which fell over things and tried patiently to fit a set of grown-up manners on boyish uncouthness, and was appealing in its immaturity. Dick had a very tender feeling for the faults of this son-who-might-have-been.

How silent the room was! The silence of the dead. How often he had heard those words without realizing their poignant meaning! The dead . . . why, that meant Marge! How remote it made her seem, calling her that! His Marge, whose life was joined to his in all the dear, intimate bonds of marriage. He had an unreasonable sense of isolation, as though Marge had wilfully shut him from her presence.

The twilight was falling—the long spring twilight which Marge always said was created to encourage the little spring flowers to grow. Marge loved little things, young things. If she had had a baby—his son and hers——

THE WILLOW chair was barely discernible in the window, yet Dick's eyes were drawn to it irresistibly.

The silence of death . . . queer how the words kept recurring to him. *It was so still in the room!* Not a peaceful, serene stillness, but a choking smother past which . . . something . . . was struggling to reach. Silence . . . silence. Without reason, mystically, he felt as though he were in the midst of a combat, silent and unseen. The sense of struggle grew, became intolerable. His breath came fast, his hands grew wet and cold. A consciousness of suspense throbbed within him. Something—somebody—wanted something from him. Was it Marge? Was she near—was she *near?* That curtain—*what made it move?* Ah, the window was open, that was all. But the chair—the willow chair! *Was it rocking?* Or did the tears in his eyes blur it into apparent motion? The silence—the awful, travailing silence—about to be broken . . . by what . . . *whom?*

"*Dick! Dickie dear!*"

"Yes, Marge! Yes, honey!" he answered loudly.

Marge's voice—so dear and familiar that his first shuddering fear was lost in a wild uprush of joy. Marge! Marge! She wasn't dead. She was here, here in the room where she had known he would seek her. It was all a mistake. Marge wasn't dead at all. She had hurried home to find him, and now she was here, impatient to tell him her news.

But—Marge was dead. That was heavily, drearily true. She had been killed in an automobile accident at four o'clock that afternoon. He, her husband, had arrived too late to catch one look from her eyes, one smile from her lips. She had lain there as he had seen her hundreds of times, her eyes softly closed, her lips softly folded. Folded on her secret. Relaxed in sleep. But they had told him she was dead.

Dead. The dead cannot speak. He must say those words aloud—emphatically, brutally—to drive their import home and kill the riotous hope that her voice awoke. Her voice? The dead cannot speak. Marge hadn't called.

"Dick! Dickie! Dickie dear!"

And again he answered loudly: "Yes, Marge! Oh, yes, dear!"

Marge! Not know her voice, the tender way she said his name? De-ar! Marge always made two syllables of the little word. Marge dead? Why, the room was stirring with her presence! The frocks hung ready for her in the closet, the silver mirror waited the touch of her hand. The little slippers thrust forth their stubby toes suggestively. She was here, close beside him, her voice in his ear. If he couldn't see her, it was because of the light—the light was almost gone. He could *hear* her, calling him again.

"Dick! Dick!"

There was a note of urgency in her voice. Just so had she called to him when she slipped over the edge of the ravine that day in the woods and held to a slender sapling until he came. Just so had she called him when she broke through the thin ice, skating.

At last he turned on the reading-light. The willow chair seemed to start out of the darkness as though Marge had just quitted it. Almost he could see her spring from it in her eagerness to make him understand.

"Dick! Dickie! Oh, Dickie!"

The light made no difference then. Marge was calling, asking something from him. It was not his fancy, born of the dusky room, his aching grief, but fact. Marge was calling. Can the dead speak? How far had Marge's spirit gone that she could thus return? A little shiver, half of fear, half of wondering delight in her nearness, crept over him.

HE FOUND himself rising to his feet, moving toward the door as though in response to some unuttered suggestion. He was conscious of two distinct sensations. Dick Perry, Marge's husband, was hungrily willing for closer contact with this unseen force from which came the voice of his wife; but the finite man, hedged about with vague fears of infinity, shrank from what the moment might hold.

In the hall he brought up sharply on a bed leaning against the wall. The guest-room bed! What was it doing here? Did Marge want him to see it? He looked at it closely, as though it held the explanation of all that had passed. A sharp edge had made a corrugated mark on the wall paper. One of the casters had dropped out and the headboard lurched drunkenly. Marge must have taken it down herself, tugging at the heavy pieces with that reckless energy she flung into everything in which she was interested and which he was always striving to check.

("Easy there, Marge! The country will be safe for democracy even if you don't get those bulbs in to-night."

"But, Dickie, I want them in now! It may rain to-morrow. Move, slow-poke! Let me get there.")

He went into the guest-room, moving as though under the guidance of some force he could not see. She'd done more than take the bed down. The little bookcase had been emptied of its recent fiction. The toilet articles were gone from the bureau. The two pictures which were one of their best jokes were gone, leaving their faintly marked outlines on the wall paper.

("People always put Madonnas in a guest-room, Dickie. I don't know why, but they do. And I think this Wallace Nutting would be pretty, too."

"My darling girl, I expect to have a man guest occasionally, and do you think a Madonna — oh, well,

have two Madonnas if you like!")

So there they had hung, the Botticelli and the Sistine. Now they were down and a picture of a St. Bernard dog hung above the bookcase. More dogs over the bed—fat puppies sprawling over a basket edge. The mulberry silk draperies had disappeared and crisp white muslin curtains had taken their place.

Marge had been up to something, that was plain. Whom was she expecting? Why take the bed down? For a moment his interest in the question wiped out the realization of what had happened. His grief was too new to be a habit yet. He couldn't make Marge *seem* dead. He was actually on the point of striding toward the stairs and calling down, "For the love of Pete, Marge, what's going on up here? Expecting some Jap friends over the week-end?" when he remembered. . . . That was the worst of a thing like this. You didn't get it all over in one smashing blow. You got it again and again, every time you jumped into the familiar contours of every-day living. Marge wouldn't die once, but a hundred times—a thousand, as he came upon a moment empty of her.

THE ATTIC door was open. She'd been up there, lugging something down, too. A box on the lowest step—what the dickens! His old toys, balls, a tin engine—even the rattle his mother, with the meticulous care of the mother of an only child, had saved. "Dick junior will use it some day," she said when—when he had married Berta.

Berta!

Dick turned away with a shudder of repulsion. How awful to remember her now—to-night! If Marge were near . . . could know his thoughts . . . would she resent his thinking of Berta? But the dead harbored no resentment. Had Marge been long enough dead? He shook himself mentally. These were morbid thoughts, almost childish. If Marge knew, then she understood how he hated to remember that another woman had been his wife even for a brief and dreadful year. The infatuated boy who had married Berta never seemed to be himself; not the Dick Perry who sat alone on the attic steps, striving to understand the strangeness of things in his home, longing to know what Marge had wanted to tell him.

The whole revolting business had occupied so short a time that now it seemed as remote as something that had happened in a dream. Marriage with a professional dancer after a week's acquaintance; the discovery that there was another man in her life; the divorce and Berta's brazen confession in court that the child which was coming—the child for which he longed with an intensity he could not account for—was not Dick's, but an older, a wealthier man's.

Berta had expected Howard Ellison to marry her after the divorce, but he had not done so. He had settled a generous sum upon her for the care of his child and vanished into Europe. Berta later had made a desperate attempt at a reconciliation with Dick, but by then he had met Marge, and it sickened him to remember the other woman existed. It was a chapter in his life he wished passionately to forget, and after a time Berta ceased to write or telephone, and Marge never spoke of her after she discovered how he hated it.

Why was he thinking of her now? Oh, yes, the toys! Those mementoes of the little boy who had been himself. Just for a mo-

ment, seeing them, he had recaptured the deep delight he had known when he believed that he was to have a child of his own. His bitter resentment toward Berta had sprung not so much from the knowledge of her infidelity to him, but from the fact that because of it she had deprived him of his child. He could even have borne to live with her who had become all but intolerable to him if by so doing he had secured the presence of a child of his own.

A SON! A little chap who would tear his clothes and tramp mud in and "wash on the towel," after childhood's ancient fashion; who would turn to his father for masculine understanding and sympathy; whom he would take to the ball game Saturday afternoons and with whom he would discuss the merits of the players in man-to-man way. A boy who would break windows and argue about riding his bicycle on the motor-crowded highway, and forget to put his soiled clothes in the wash, and tease the cook, and want to build his own radio set out of parts for which he had traded the expensive watch that was his Christmas gift, and hate Latin in High School, and get into debt at college. A son of his own.

And Marge's. How blind he had been, how stupid! Here was the news Marge had come to tell him. The box of toys, the dog pictures in the guest-room. And here was his little rocker, partly out of its burlap wrappings, waiting at the head of the stairs. So that was it—at last. Marge was going to have a baby, and in her usual impetuous fashion she had begun her absurd preparations. Love could not wait. The throne must be at once prepared for the coming of the monarch.

A deep tenderness toward his wife, more poignant than he had ever known, filled his heart.

Marge was going to have a baby. His son! Why, that altered everything! Marge mustn't be dead—she *couldn't* be when this was going to happen. It wouldn't be fair—reasonable—of God to let her die when she was cherishing a new life. Mother and child snatched out of existence in one brief moment—no, *no!*

Berta's boy had been taken from him. Things like that didn't happen to a man twice.

Marge—why, Marge had wanted a baby too. She wouldn't let herself be killed when she knew—knew——

THERE was that time last winter. He snatched it avidly from his memory in corroboration of Marge's desire. They had been dressing for a dinner party. He had stood at his chiffonier wrestling with his tie, and Marge in the blue wrapper thing had dropped into the willow chair to button the straps of her slippers. Silver slippers they had been, to match the blue and silver gown on the bed. And sitting there, she had fallen to dreaming in Marge's own unheeding way, her arms lying along her lap and her fingers upcurled as though they were clasping something. He'd turned to guy her about her tardiness in dressing, he remembered, but before he could speak she had said in a drawl whose latent laughter did not quite conceal its wistfulness:

"This would be an awfully good chair to hold Dickie junior in, wouldn't it? No high arms to get in the way, and such a long sweep to the rockers. Dick, don't you think the little scamp is a long time making his appearance?"

He'd put her off with some remark about not being crazy to walk the floor nights with a colicky baby, because he hadn't liked the shadow of pain in her eyes. She mustn't know how badly he wanted a child, not unless—but Marge had known.

Marge had always known everything that concerned him. She had divined the deep longing for that bit of humanity which was to perpetuate himself, and that knowledge had given an added edge to her own hunger. That was why—oh, no wonder she had jumped into the car and dashed down to tell him the minute she knew!

("Dickie, a baby of our very own! I'll rock him to sleep—I will, too, if I want to! It'll be my baby, won't it?"

"H'm! I guess I'll have some claim on him, young woman!")

This evening—if she had come home—they would have sat, lover-like, on the big couch and planned; planned as though they were dealing with to-morrow's problems of diet and school and conduct. There would have been Marge's soft laughter, gaily defiant of the fear which lurked beneath their joy. There would have been . . . Marge in his arms . . . close to his triumphant heart.

Marge was dead. No use to fool himself into believing that she was downstairs waiting for him. Gone—gone—she and their child. Poor Marge! Never to hold the tiny form in her arms, sitting in the willow chair in the blue wrapper thing. Never to kneel worshipfully with outstretched hands for those first wavering baby footsteps, as he had seen other women do. Never to stand shoulder to shoulder with a young son, exultant of his height, his big-boned thinness.

("Throw your shoulders back, you great giant! And look out, there! You've put your foot right down on that pansy!")

IT WAS very dark when he entered Marge's room and sat down near the willow chair. There was the sad comfort of knowing now that he understood, knew the message she wanted to give him. When her voice vibrated through the quiet room he was surprised.

"Dick! Dickie dear!"

"Yes, Marge, I know," he answered pitifully. "I know what you're trying to tell me. Oh, Marge!"

But the voice went on calling, calling; tugging at his heart-strings, filling the room with that half-fearful sense of her presence. It was inexpressibly piteous to him—now that he knew Marge's news. Had the consciousness of her loss followed her into that dim world where now she was and was she returning to him for comfort? Do the dead suffer? The blessed dead—the peaceful dead — were these but phrases, coined from the need of assurance to those who were left?

"Dick! Dick!"

He knew Marge's news. Still she called. Did she know that he knew, or did she want——?

He sprang up. It was all very well for him to speculate, to guess, here alone in the house which did not yet hold even Marge's body; but he had to know for a certainty if his surmise were true. Doctor Thurlow could tell him. Marge had perhaps been to him before she telephoned. Once the idea occurred to him, he was feverishly sure he was right. Doctor Thurlow knew. Dick looked at his watch and was surprised to see that it was after midnight. He had not thought he had been home so long. No matter! He must see Doctor Thurlow at once.

He stumbled over some object on his way across the yard to the

garage. A kiddie car? A scooter? Nonsense! A pot of ferns Marge had set out—was it only this morning?—to catch a shower of rain. She'd forgotten to take it in, and the sun had come out later. The tender fronds would wither now. The backyard would have made a dandy place for the boy to play. He'd need a sandpile the first thing, and Marge would have to confine her garden to the east side and . . .

But Marge was dead, and there wouldn't be a boy.

HE RANG many times before the bolt was slid and the doctor's grizzled head poked around the door.

"What's wanted?" he asked irritably. "Oh, it's you, Dick! What are you doing here this time of night?"

He admitted Dick grudgingly and revealed himself clad in bright blue pajamas, his thick hair wildly disheveled. He was sorry for Dick Perry, whom he had known from childhood, but he had given up night practice and was getting too old to be routed out like this after a hard day. He softened as he listened to Dick's stammering sentences.

"No, no, my boy, there was nothing like that. You are entirely wrong—absolutely. Your wife talked to me about this very thing not more than a week ago. She told me then how she regretted her childless condition—more even for your sake than her own. She seemed greatly impressed with your longing for a son. It was something else she wanted to tell you — some little household matter she thought would please you perhaps. Go home, now, Dick, and get to bed."

Dick took his leave. He had no feeling at all on the subject by now. A great exhaustion had come upon him, and for the time being his thoughts were vague. Marge's voice seemed stilled forever. He began to doubt that he had heard it at all. It was part of the bewilderment of this terrible day.

THE NEXT twenty-four hours, however, were keyed to a pitch of intensity which obliterated from his mind the condolences of friends, the sad bustle of funeral preparations, everything but his ceaseless effort to interpret Marge's insistent appeal. Her voice wakened him from a restless sleep, and all day it echoed in his ears.

When they brought her body home he banished everybody from the room and shut himself alone with that beloved form. It seemed to him that then, if ever, the message would be made clear.

But he had no sense of her presence here. That smile was not Marge's. Marge's smile was a funny little one-sided one. Those waxen hands had never gathered flowers, dusted books, lain warmly in his own. The beautiful, still figure had a look of Marge, but it was not Marge. Marge waited for him upstairs.

"Dick! Dickie! Oh, Dick!"

Was it his fancy that a note of hopelessness sounded in her voice? Was she beginning to despair of making him understand? The ironclad stupidity of flesh and blood, he thought savagely, held him back from closer contact. He threw himself into the effort to the exclusion of everything else. As in a dream he attended the funeral. In a dream he resisted the appeals of relatives to return home with them. He ate the meals Mary set before him; answered the letters and telegrams which had accumulated; but his real life was lived in Marge's room, where he sat facing the willow chair and striving to interpret that echoing call.

HE STROVE to bring logic and reason to bear on the subject. Marge's news had concerned a child, as witness the preparations she had made for one. It was not her child. Doctor Thurlow had been definite on that point. Could Marge have decided to adopt a child?

Dick pondered that solution. Marge had never spoken of such a thing, but it was possible she had considered it. Or, which was more likely, it might have occurred to her that very day and with Marge-like impetuosity she had decided to act upon it. Would that account for her excitement, her haste to impart the news to him?

After another night broken by fitful waking, when a sense of spiritual concentration filled the room like a tangible presence, he drove to the Orphans' Home and asked to take a child for a few days. His request was highly irregular, but the matron knew Dick and consented.

"He'll get enough of it soon, a man that's never had any children," she confided to the nurse who was to accompany the baby. She betrayed no surprise therefore when a day later Mr. Perry returned the baby with an incoherent apology and a generous check for the Home.

The experiment had been a failure. He had insisted that the crib be put in the guest-room, and his heart had beaten thickly as he stole in there at night, a tall figure in his bathrobe, to where the baby lay sleeping.

"Dick! Dickie dear! Oh, Dick!"

"Marge dearest, I'm here! Dick's here! Can't you tell me what it is?"

"Dick! Dick!"

God! Would he never understand? Was he to fail her after her frantic efforts to reach his ear?

Somewhere Marge's spirit was beating itself against the walls of separation, striving, striving to get back to him. Fear—no, not fear; there could be no fear in connection with little Marge—but awe, timorous reverence for an unknown force, crept over him. The wonder of this experience, the terror, the exquisite torture of his own bewilderment, fogged his mind at times. At others he was conscious of an insuperable mental clarity which found nothing strange in Marge's return; only tried with a spiritual alertness to get her message.

IT HAD something to do with a child. It was not Marge's child. It was not this homeless waif who lay breathing so shallowly in the flutter of the muslin curtains. What child then?

Was it—*Berta's?*

Did Marge mean that? But the boy who should have been his son was another man's; a piteous little creature whose existence was no concern of his. Surely Marge would not have him interest himself in Howard Ellison's child. Would she? Would she? Had Berta made a fresh appeal to Marge, and had that soft heart urged kindness to the boy who should have been her husband's?

It seemed to Dick that all the agony, the struggle, which had gone before, was as nothing to the battle he fought with that idea. To bring himself voluntarily in contact with Berta; to make concessions from which his very soul recoiled—it was too much even for Marge to ask. If his hypothesis were true, if Marge's over-sensitive conscience had urged a responsibility toward the child which was to all intents and purposes fatherless, it was a morbid attitude which he could have dispelled in a few minutes' talk with her.

(*"It's one of those Quixotic things you sweet women think of. No man*

would consider it for a moment. Howard Ellison's child!"

"But he might have been your boy, Dick! I can't forget that."

"Yes, he ought to have been my boy. That's just the point. You see, dear?")

Little Marge had gone beyond the reach of reason and plain talk; gone too far to be influenced by those arguments which common sense dictated.

"Dick! Dickie dear!"

THE SECOND day he yielded, and set in motion the wheels which should disclose Berta's whereabouts. Dick had seldom found himself in a position as thoroughly distasteful as that of his interview with her lawyer. That gentleman's surprise, changing visibly to a knowing understanding, made him wince. "Here's a fellow wanting to know his first wife's address before his second is cold in her grave." That was what his eyes were saying even while he explained gravely that he was no longer in communication with Mrs. Perry.

Mrs. Perry! But of course Berta was the woman who bore his name now.

"I believe that I heard she took her stage name after the divorce," the lawyer said, as though he followed Dick's thoughts. "I can give you her sister's address, and you can trace her from there. Wait! Now that I think of it, my client told me she intended to make her home with Miss Burgett—Miss Genevieve Burgett, you know."

Yes, Dick knew. He remembered Genevieve, Berta's sister, who had spent a few days with them in the [illegible] weeks of their married life. [illegible] resented being made to recall [illegible]e details of any of that time. It [illegible]eemed to take him farther away from Marge; closer to Berta and the repellent memories he had of their life together. He felt that it would be wise to ask the lawyer about the boy, but he could not summon the words to his lips. He could imagine the unsavory significance the man would attach to such an inquiry. With brief thanks and a handshake he could not avoid, he left the office.

THE CHEAP apartment-house to which he had been directed reminded him vividly of Berta. She had been living in just such a place when he first met her, and he had thought with youthful fatuity that the setting was basely unworthy of such a jewel. Now, with its ornate pretentiousness serving but to heighten its paint-flaked colonnades, its filmed window-panes, it typified to him the sordid cheapness of his married life. He asked for Miss Burgett in a voice so low the elevator boy had to ask him to repeat the name.

"Fourth floor. To your left."

As he was borne swiftly upward, Dick had to exert his will to keep from telling the boy he had changed his mind. He was going to see Berta again, now. All the pain, the hidden shame which had lain quiescent under Marge's soothing love, surged to the surface. His rapid discovery of Berta's innate vulgarity, the searing revelation of her illicit relations with Howard Ellison—it all came back to him in a nauseous wave as the elevator door clanged behind him. There was just one thing to do: get the whole business over with as quickly as possible.

Genevieve answered his ring. He recognized her at once, though the years, few as they had been, had aged her. She had never possessed any of Berta's beauty, but a resemblance between them was clearly discernible.

"How do you do, Jen?" he asked

kindly. "I'd like to talk with you a few minutes. May I come in?"

He was surprised at her sudden pallor. Astonishment at his presence was natural, but this hint of consternation, fear. Did she dread a scene between him and Berta? Not that. Scenes in which reproaches, recriminations, and hysterics abounded were the breath of life to such as she.

She let him come in, giving him a loose handshake and an uncertain smile. A gush of perfume, the exotic, sensuous perfume Berta affected, smote him at the door. For a perceptible moment he was dizzy, so plainly did the hateful odor bring back the past. The last time a whiff of it had assailed his nostrils was in the court-room where he had sat, whitening before the scornful pity of the spectators, confessedly a man who had failed to protect the inviolability of his home.

"Is Berta in? I'd like to see her, please." Some one said the words. It must have been he.

THEY were both standing in the littered parlor, but at his question the woman sank into a chair.

"Berta? Dick Perry, do you mean to tell me you don't know that Berta is dead?"

Berta dead? Marge, she meant. But when a realization of her words came to him, for a shocked instant he feared he would laugh aloud. Dead!—gone out of a world which would be the cleaner to him for her going. His mind lifted as though it were throwing off a burden. Death, which had lately been so cruel to him, had done him one good turn, at least. He had a wild impulse to seize Jen's hand and burst into hysterical thanksgiving. When he met her gaze and knew that he had not betrayed his relief he could hardly credit his self-control.

"No, I had not heard," he managed to say. "When—when did it happen?"

"She was buried last Wednesday. Two days after she—your second wife—was killed. She'd been sick a long time, though. T. B. it was."

Dick's thoughts raced madly. Was there any connection between these almost simultaneous deaths? Had Marge met Berta before she died? He put the question to Jen abruptly.

She was unnecessarily sharp in her reply.

"No, why should she? We didn't ask any favors from anybody. I took care of her myself right up to the end. She was my sister, wasn't she? My only sister. She was an awful care to me toward the last—didn't leave her bed for weeks, and I was up a good deal nights. But I did the best I could for her—her and the boy."

"The boy? He's here—with you?"

"Where else would he be?" she asked with resentment. "His mother dead and his father God knows where, and you too high and mighty to come see Berta even on her deathbed."

"I didn't know she was ill," he said irritably. He didn't want the question raised of his sentiments toward Berta. "About the boy—his father — Ellison supports him, doesn't he? Makes him a monthly allowance?"

"Indeed, he doesn't! That stopped more'n a year ago. We wrote and wrote, but the letters all came back. Nobody knows where he is. It doesn't matter. I guess I can take care of my own nephew myself."

DICK leaned against the wall. Now at last he understood what Marge wanted! Berta's child was depend-

ent upon the charity of this woman; the boy who should have been his own was motherless. Somehow, Marge had learned this and planned to take him home.

He could reconstruct the scene. Marge had made the discovery in the morning early, before she had finished straightening the living-room. Some one had telephoned her—perhaps Berta's doctor at her request. She had determined to bring the boy home at once and had set about preparing a room for him. In the midst of her preparations, characteristically, she had dropped everything to hurry to her husband with the news. His unselfish Marge! She'd never think of herself; would see only the joy she thought the boy's advent would bring to Dick.

Howard Ellison's child beneath his roof! Could a woman plumb the bitterness of such a thing? Another man's son, conceived by his wife while she shared his fortunes, growing to manhood in the home he had made for Marge. A very travesty of fatherhood, from which his every instinct revolted.

He walked to the window, looking down at the drab courtyard below. He felt rather than saw Jen's eyes upon him. Did she know the thoughts which were torturing his mind?

It would have been different if he had not so wanted a child of his own. Other men, men who regarded paternity as an incident in their lives, might have taken this boy into their homes with little feeling beyond an appreciation of their own generosity in so doing. But he had longed for a son from the very moment of marriage. Looking back at it now, he felt that this subconscious desire had contributed to his marriage with Berta; helped to blind him to the kind of woman she was. When she had told him, raging with impotent rebellion at the fact, of her coming motherhood, his delight had been deep. His revulsion when Berta, surprised in the arms of Ellison, had taunted him with the fact that the child was not his, had poisoned the springs of his being. It was Marge who had sweetened the bitter waters.

"Dick! Dick!"

Soft and pleading her voice sounded in his ears. Was he to be less generous than Marge, who had been ready to welcome another woman's child into her home? With a great sigh he surrendered. Marge wanted him to do this thing—this unnatural, difficult thing. It was enough.

"Jen," he said, turning back to where she sat, drooping and apprehensive, "I'll take the boy, for a while at least. Of course, you understand"—he added it hastily to forestall her comments—"I'm accepting no responsibility for him—yet. He is merely coming to me for a visit. No one need know who he is. The fact that I took a child from the Orphans' Home last week will give color to my desire to lighten my loneliness with his presence."

She offered several objections, was querulously curious about his motive, but in the end she brought the boy. He was a chubby three-year-old, and, to Dick's relief, had no look of either Berta or Howard. He was docilely interested to go with the strange man, and within the hour Dick passed through his own door, leading Berta's son by the hand.

WITH Mary's help, he completed Marge's arrangements for his young guest. A small bed was brought down from the attic and set up. The toys were taken from their box and spread before the child's delighted gaze. It gave Dick a queer feeling

to see his own tin engine in those chubby hands. The few garments Jen had provided were bestowed in the bureau's empty drawers. Dick placed the little rocker with his own hands in the guest-room. As a last touch, he moved the willow chair into the guest-room. Marge would have sat there to hear the boy say his prayers. He did all this grimly but with the sure conviction that he was pleasing Marge. Then for the first time since her death he went to the office and attacked the massed accumulation of his work.

The boy—Jen had not thought to tell his name, and Dick had shrunk from asking—was in bed when Dick came home. He was content to go to his room without seeing Berta's son. Peace had descended upon him. He had done what Marge wanted, at whatever cost to himself. The beloved voice would entreat him no more. He fell at once into heavy slumber. Out of it he was aroused by an anguished call!

"Dick! Dick! Dickie dear! Oh, Dick! Dick!"

He jerked himself upright, his heart racing.

Marge! Marge again, pleading, calling, entreating!

"Dick! Dickie! Oh, Dick, Dick!"

"Marge, Marge! What is it? Oh, Marge, for God's sake, find some way to make me understand!"

"Dick! Dick!"

Dick's brain rang with the anguish of it. A climax had been reached, and that desperate voice was growing fainter. Dick beat his hands against the empty darkness. He strove to conquer the tyranny of his body which intervened between him and Marge.

"Tell me, dear! Tell me! Is it the boy? Is it something to do with the boy?"

Mysteriously the silence assented.

HE HURRIED into the guest-room, switching on the shaded light by the bed. The boy's cheek was rosy, the little breast rose and fell in healthy respiration. Dick felt a stirring of tenderness at his heart. Hitherto this child had been to him the concrete expression of its mother's shame, or his own loss. The most the man who had been Berta's husband could feel toward her boy had been a careful justness of attitude. Now he looked upon him as the child who might have been his own.

What a sturdy little chap he was! How fine the small features, how straight the baby limbs! If only Berta had not told him; if she had let him keep his belief in his false fatherhood. The court would have given him the child, and later Marge would have welcomed it for his sake. Three years—by this time he would have learned to run down the walk to greet him with the joyous cry of "Daddy!" which met so many other men. He was old enough to have picture-books now; a dog of his own—a coaster wagon. Marge—with a twist of his heart Dick realized that Marge would have been alive—would be growing particular about table manners and giving his hand to people when he greeted them. Music lessons—she'd insist on music lessons, and the boy would whine and be sternly ordered to his practice by a father whose sympathies were all with the culprit. Berta's child—and Howard Ellison's!

"Dick! Dick!"

There was a solemn charge in Marge's voice. He was drawing very close to the mystery. The air was palpitant with meaning. This child—this son of another man—unrevealed forces were centered in him. Marge—their love—close, ah, so close!—regally spurning the limitations of the flesh. *Hush, hush!*

Listen! As love speaks, sending its tender urgency through the void that widens between the dead and the quick, so shall love hear, straining past the bonds of substance.

The body no longer dragged at Dick's yearning spirit. Earth fell away. He was alone with Marge in mystic communion, ecstatic, echoing with divinity. There was no death, no life, but love which was both death and life. The effulgence of love was all about them; the ineffable music of love stirred the air which was not air, but spiritual clarity. The child—the earthly son of Marge's spirit—lay in her arms.

"Yours! Dick! Dick!"

It was on that wave of sound, more exquisite than silence, that Dick's soul was borne back to earth.

HE HARDLY waited for daylight before he got out the car and drove to Jen's apartment. She was still in bed when he rang at her door, but he sternly bade her dress and admit him.

"I've come for the truth," he told her when she opened the door. She had slipped on a gay silk negligée over her nightgown, and her hair was hidden under an elaborate confection of ribbon and lace. She looked frightened and very haggard in the spring sunlight.

"My wife was here before Berta died," he said deliberately. "Don't try to lie to me, Jen. I *know!*"

"Well, then, she was," the woman admitted sullenly. "Berta made me telephone when she knew she was dying and ask your wife to come. It was the very morning of the day she was killed."

Dick winced. He could see Marge's swift response to that summons, the unselfish pity which had prompted her kindness to the woman who had been her husband's wife.

"She came here and Berta told her —what?"

"How do I know?" she began, but at his quick gesture she went on hastily: "She told your wife that the boy is—yours. She'd sworn it was Ellison's because she thought he'd marry her afterwards, or settle something handsome on her, in a lump. But she knew it was coming before—well——"

"I understand. She knew it was my child. And she perjured herself before the world in an attempt to get money. More money than I could give her. Stole my son and blackened his name! God, what a woman!"

"She was my sister, anyhow!" Jen began to sob noisily. "And God knows she paid for what she did. Grubbing along, all three of us, on the miserly allowance Ellison made her."

"It was all you had to live on—Ellison's money? I'm beginning to understand. You kept this information to yourself because you feared to lose the allowance. Berta stole my son first—and now you!"

"I was so darned poor," she whimpered. "I gave up a good position to take care of Berta, and it seemed no more'n right that I should have something to pay me for it. Besides—believe it or not, it's true —I'm fond of the boy. He's a sweet kid."

THE BOY still slept when Dick returned.

It was his child, theirs! He bent over and slowly kissed the soft pink palm. In that moment he knew that Marge had given him his son by travail of the spirit as real as any physical agony of birth.

And then my heart stopped — there was a face outside my window.

Long Shadows

A SERIAL STORY

By KATHARINE HAVILAND TAYLOR

In LONG SHADOWS Katharine Haviland Taylor has written another of her unusual mystery yarns. The author's ability to create situations filled with thrilling adventures and well-drawn characters is well known to MYSTERY STORIES readers. In this new story we feel sure you will enjoy the rapid movement from beginning to end and will await the surprising denouement with uninterrupted interest.

CHAPTER I

THE GHOST AT LONG SHADOWS.

I, ANGELICA BURKE, recently quite alone in the world, had never seen the aunt to whom I was going, and I wished I knew more of her, never having enjoyed fumbling in the dark. Of course I knew her history and a few stray items that told something of her ways. I knew, for instance, that she was my mother's much older half-sister; that she lived with her three sons in the old house called "Long Shadows," from which my mother had eloped with a young, poverty-stricken artist, who later became my father. I knew, too, that my aunt liked her friends to *think* she was doing the proper social thing, even when she didn't—or couldn't—do it! And one of the tricks that told me this had made a good deal of amusement in my mother's life and mine: each year, at the proper season, we had to mail *back* to the States letters that had

been sent to us *from* the States by Aunt Agnes, who would have her friends think that she traveled extensively!

SO when Mr. Theodore Cassell, the purser of the *Atlantis* (in which I was crossing to the States in order to be with my aunt) approached me on the last evening aboard, I asked him to sit down and I gave to him the letter of introduction my aunt had sent me for him. I had not presented it before because my mother's recent death had made me want to avoid talk with anybody.

"So—you're going to 'Long Shadows'?" said Mr. Cassell as he settled. "I know the place and your aunt rather well."

I felt my interest rise as I told him that I had seen neither my aunt nor her home.

"You'll like your aunt," Mr. Cassell stated, "and your three fine cousins, too. I came to know Roger and William fairly well when I was at 'Long Shadows,' and Roger I'd known on shipboard, too. Percival—he's the middle brother, isn't he?"

I assented.

"Percival was too ill to see me while I was at your aunt's house," Mr. Cassell explained, "so I missed him. Some sort of nervous malady he has, isn't it?"

"I understand so," I said, "and it's very sad. He was the brilliant one of the boys. He made a remarkable record in college, and he did well in the law for two years after he graduated, and then he had this strange breakdown. He's never recovered, and there seems to be no help for him."

"To bad," Mr. Cassell murmured. Then he added: "If he has any sense, he'll forget everything but his heart after you arrive!"

I said nothing, because men are given to that sort of speech, I have found; and I have also found it saves a good deal of trouble not to heed it.

"Well," he went on, smiling a little, "you'll find it interesting. Do you know the States?"

I shook my head, for, although I was born in New York, we had lived in Europe since I was two years old.

"'LONG SHADOWS' is in New Jersey," he continued, "and a bit out of a most desolate sort of little village that has shrunk instead of grown. Some of the houses are abandoned and falling to pieces, and they give the place its tone. Dispiriting, but fascinating—or it was to me. 'Long Shadows' itself is absurdly named. It is one of the gayest and the prettiest houses I've ever stepped into. You'll like it, if"—he paused a moment—"*you don't mind—ghosts.*"

"I don't believe in them," I stated definitely, "and those who don't believe in them don't see them."

Mr. Cassell raised his brows quizzically.

"You'll see this one," he promised me, and he smiled.

"How do you know the thing you see *is* a ghost?" I asked.

"Because," he answered, "nothing but a ghost acts that way. He raps all over the place, and then doors open of themselves—that sort of thing. Your aunt, by the by, is greatly interested in psychic phenomena. She holds first-rate seances in her pretty drawing-room.

"I slept in the east room," he went on after a slight pause. "That's the guest room. You'll probably sleep there. If you do, you will hear strange noises—scratchings, scrapings, taps—at exactly two o'clock every night when the moon does not shine. The ghost evidently fears the lunar lunacy that is prated

of, as he doesn't appear on moonlight nights. Your aunt told me that. Then, the closet door opens of itself. You can shut it and lock it and put the key to the door under your pillow. In the morning that door will be open, or something will show that it has been open. Nothing on God's earth will keep it shut. Nothing wrong ever happens, Miss Burke; only—the ghost stalks, and he is stronger than keys or bars of iron, stronger than any device of man. They've tested him."

"OF COURSE the house is electrically lit?" I questioned. I knew that most American houses were equipped to the most amazing degree with every modern invention.

"Well—yes," Mr. Cassell answered. I didn't understand his hesitation. Again he flashed me an apologetic look. "If I've worried you," he said, "I'm going to be miserable. I don't really know why I've gone on in this way. I think because—I was afraid that if I didn't talk a great deal of nothing, I might talk a great deal of something distasteful to you."

I said quickly: "I'm glad you told me. I'd rather have known. Then, when the cupboard door swings open, squeaking on its rusty hinges, I shall know I have a misty gray visitor."

"The door *does* squeak," he said. He looked at me narrowly. "Honestly, you've never been there?"

"Certainly not!" I responded with a little resentment.

"Well, of course, many doors *do* squeak," he offered in a mollified voice. Then after drawing a deep breath, his eyes still rather too concentratedly fixed upon me, he said: "I'm going to ask you to carry two things to your aunt for me. Will you do that? One's a small package and the other is made of such news of her friends as may interest her."

"I shall be most happy to do so," I assured him.

"THE package," he said, after thanking me, "holds two cakes of lavender soap, that *Roi d'Etat* that you get in London—your aunt likes it—and tea. The news will be the heavier burden. But you'll be compensated if you want to please her, for she'll like that the better of the two gifts. She is very much alive, as you will soon learn. She likes to hear of life, even when it's a bit highly flavored or spiced. Ready?"

I said I was.

"Tell her," he said, "that the De Peysters didn't go to Nice, after all, but that they separated. She went to Mentone and there met that young violinist in whom she has what is called by her friends 'a motherly interest'; and Dick de Peyster solaced himself, I understand, with the Russian dancer, Nadia."

Mr. Cassell stopped to smile. "It is rotten to retail this, isn't it?" he interpolated. "But they are old friends of your aunt's, and, as she says, 'Life is made tolerable by sin.'"

I opened my bag.

"I suppose I shall have to put down the ghastly names," I said. "I'm not used to gossip, and when I chance to hear this sort, I try to forget it. I don't enjoy it."

"Of course you don't," he blurted. "One sees that in your lovely eyes."

"Go on," I prompted a little coldly, my pencil poised above the tiny tablet I had taken from my purse. Shortly, and with a bare skeleton of fact, he told me scandalous tales, and after he was done the names of those concerned in them were written on my pad: Darlington, De

Peyster, Field, Blake, Schuyler, Hopewell-Kent——

"Right?" I asked.

"Quite," he said crisply.

WE ROSE then, and he went up with me to B Deck, where my cabin was. Before I turned into the corridor he said:

"I'll send the package up with Sage, the steward who valets for me. I hope it won't crowd your luggage."

I told him I had endless room.

"Some one meeting you, of course?" he questioned next.

"Roger, I think," I answered.

"Well, that's good. If you don't mind, I'll look you up in the customs. I might be able to help you a little."

I thanked him, but not with much enthusiasm. Life had taught me—as it teaches many women—to fear men who enjoy "affairs."

"And if," he added, flushing all over his thin, lean face, "you want help of any kind at any time, you'll let me know? If I'm on this side, I'll come flying, at your whistle!"

"You're most kind," I said, and I'm afraid a little icily. Then I bade him good night and went into my cabin, where, a little later, I tried to sleep, but without too much success. And it was not the ghost at "Long Shadows" that I feared, but the meeting with my aunt and my three cousins, who were the only relatives I had left in the world.

AS I was dressing in the morning Sage brought the package from Mr. Cassell to me, and I slipped it into my bag without opening it, of course. Then I stepped out on deck for a few breaths of air before I went down to eat my breakfast. On deck I forgot my need of breakfast for a little time, through my absorption in the harbor—a lovely place in the first of the morning, with the outlines on the shore muted by haze, and despite this, the color brought out by the powerful sun that in the States makes the newcomer blink.

People were, of course, swarming the decks and in the air was the heavy charge of vibrant excitement that comes with landing. It touched me, naturally. I remember I thought: "This is my first step toward a new life that I want to make fine—that I *must* make fine!"

And then I turned, to be diverted from my hopes by something that I saw. Not thirty feet from me stood Mr. Cassell and Sage in earnest conference. They were both looking at me, and upon Sage's lips was a sly smile he was trying to subdue. Mr. Cassell was frowning. He glanced away instantly and consciously as I faced him. Sage became the eager-to-please steward. He saluted me by touching his forehead with a finger and then he slunk toward one of the open doorways. I was annoyed and perplexed. What Mr. Cassell could find to say of me to Sage, I did not know, nor did I know why he should want to talk of me in this intimate way with the man who was by way of being his servant.

As I went down the broad stairs which took me closer at every shallow step to the odor of coffee, I was decidedly glad of my eleventh-hour presentation to Mr. Cassell of the letter of introduction. As I ate, I found the memory of that whispered colloquy haunting me: Mr. Cassell stooping, head canted in order to be nearer the slyly smiling lips of Sage; four eyes fixed, it seemed to me, mercilessly upon me.

"I am absurd," I mused, as I gave my waiter one of those odd notes with the V on them which are

equivalent to a pound. "This encounter is but one of the transient ones."

And then, heartened by my own reassurance, I hurried up to the library, where uniformed men were looking at passports.

A LITTLE later I went down the ridged, shaking gang-plank. Mr. Cassell had more than fulfilled his promise to look me up in the customs, for he was waiting for me with my luggage.

"Ah, good morning," he said loudly. "Doubtless your cousin will be along shortly. We docked a little earlier than usual. These all your things?"

"Yes," I answered as the official began to unstrap my boxes and I hunted my purse for my keys.

"Anything to declare?" asked the official as he poked around a tray in a way that made me think of a cat kneading its bed.

"No, nothing," I responded, and at that moment he pounced upon the packet Mr. Cassell had given me.

"And this?" the official questioned as he held it up.

"I don't know," I said, looking at Mr. Cassell. "Soap and tea, isn't it?"

Mr. Cassell said a short "Yes," and he added, irritably or nervously—I couldn't tell which: "there's no necessity of undoing all that cord. Soap and tea in there, I tell you, nothing else."

But the official, smiling a little grimly, opened the packet, and as he did Mr. Cassell gave me a strange, probing glance which I caught after I had looked up at him with surprise. For, although there were soap and tea in that packet, there were also letters in it—two of them, both thick and sealed. With these was a blotter that had on it several legible impressions of some one's writing.

"Good packing?" Mr. Cassell asked of me. His eyes narrowed as he looked at me with a smile I could not understand.

I said a rather confused "I suppose," and then, for the moment, I forgot the affair with the appearance of a short, rotund man whom I imagined to be about forty. When Mr. Cassell sung out a hearty "Well, Garrison!" I knew that my cousin Roger was before me, and all the forebodings I had had about meeting him disappeared. He was made so attractive by his honest, open look and by his evident uncertainty as to what to do next!

"YOUR most charming cousin!" Mr. Cassell said, with a bow to me.

Roger said a pleased, amusingly surprised "Sh-she is—all of th-that! Isn't she?"

I laughed, and I stood on tiptoe to kiss him. He responded most gallantly and, keeping his arm around me, he patted my back as we chatted a few moments more.

"N-now, Cassell," he said, and the slight hesitation in his speech made him even more dear. "Th-think of having this at 'Long Shadows'!"

"I have thought a good—deal—of—it!" Teddy Cassell drawled out as he stared down at me.

"S-so that's the way of it?" Roger questioned.

"Rather!" I heard.

"Well, c-come over some S-Sunday," Roger flung at Mr. Cassell. Then, with a look at an old-fashioned watch that was almost as rotund as he, he spoke of the necessity for a "l-little hurry," and after our good-bye we did hurry toward the Pennsylvania Station and thus toward "Long Shadows."

CHAPTER II

"LONG SHADOWS"

A BIT more than two hours later William, the youngest of my cousins and so the closest to my age, which is twenty-one, met us in Philadelphia with a motor which he drove. I felt a vague distrust of him as quickly as I had felt a trust in Roger. For some reason, an honest look at me did not satisfy him, but as I sat in the front seat by him I felt him stealing circumspect, appraising side-glances at me when he thought I wouldn't see them. And the welcome I had felt in Roger I didn't feel in him. In fact, I felt hostility and almost a fear.

Roger, in the back seat, prattled on rather cheerfully, saying a great deal and yet—not very much.

They were glad to have me. They needed sunlight in the house—sunlight! (William was notably silent.) My pretty face would cheer Percival. Percival's sickness, to Roger's mind, was made entirely of imagination. Entirely! Their mother would love having me. Did I like Cassell? Roger thought him "a first rate chap." (I thought: "You'd think that of any one.") William blurted out an ominous, low "I don't like him. There's something wrong with him." They argued about it a few moments, Roger in a genial, impersonal way, William scathingly, acidly, unkindly. And after a bit he relapsed into silence, evidently really troubled or angered. I couldn't tell which.

In the silence that ensued I began to absorb the look of the road that we had been traveling for close to an hour.

"W-well, we're nearing h-home," said Roger. And he sounded pleased and happy, which again endeared him to me, for it was a caustically ugly district; so ugly, in fact, that it would have depressed a soul not fixed in a happy mould. Billboards were everywhere, some glaringly new and some peeling and old, and more of them leaning than upright. Small petrol stations dotted the roadside between these. When one caught a glimpse of country it was to see a far-reaching stretch of marshy bog, with now and again a stunted tree accenting the level loneliness. The day was gray and cold. It was more like November than March, and the sky hung low and sullen.

"H-HERE'S the village," said Roger. Then he told William to stop at the station, so that he might leave the checks for my boxes, which were to come by rail. This order took us through the most depressing business district I have ever seen. Most of the shops were of one story with a built-up front that made them seem two. The houses were pinched in here and there, stumbling on the uneven, cracking pavements, and depressing Nottingham curtains hung slack in almost every soot-stained window.

"N-nice town," Roger stated as he settled again, after having attended to my boxes.

I saw William go white and his face set. He started to speak, but after a deep, uneven breath he evidently thought better of this impulse.

"We l-live out a way," Roger said then.

"THAT'S the house," said William only a little later, and I looked ahead to see a rambling stone house that held many quaintly low and broad windows and that had been covered throughout the years with ivy which, in spots, offered solid walls of green. Trees

now spread bare boughs against the leaden sky above the house, and a hedge divided the place from the lane. I loved it at sight. But one note disturbed me, and that was the sight of a heavily iron-barred window in a wing. "Percival," I thought, and my heart beat a little thickly. I hadn't known he was given to violence.

"W-well, here w-we are," said Roger. One of the doors opened and my aunt appeared in it—a little lady with curling white hair, winter-apple cheeks, and a cheerful voice that made an immediate appeal.

"Dear child!" she called. "Dear child!"

I ran up the low steps to feel her arms close around me—and there was a little tightening in my throat.

"But come in," she said briskly, after she had kissed me and told me how much my coming meant. "Tea's waiting and has been for some time and Toki's bad-tempered. Servants, my dear, in the country! Do you want to go up-stairs before you have your tea?"

"No—if I can be forgiven a little grime, I'll have my tea before I make myself presentable," I told her.

"THEN this way, dear," she said. I followed her down the long, broad hall to a rear, narrow door. As she fumbled in a pocket of her skirt for a key, I heard a step on the stair, and I looked up to see the yellow-white face of an emaciated man of more than William's height and twice his leanness. His black eyes, which were fixed on me, burned in the pallor of his face, and one lock of his long, rather oily-looking black hair had strayed across his forehead to make amazing contrast. I saw that his heavy ebon eyebrows were almost joined by his fierce and intent scowl.

"Percival is coming to have tea with us all," my Aunt Agnes said brightly. "He feels quite well to-day. Percival, this is your Cousin Angelica."

He didn't kiss me. I felt his hand—cold, damp, and thin—close rather limply over mine. Then I felt his intent eyes sweep over me.

"I keep this door locked," my aunt said as she threw it open, "because Janette—a maid who has been with me for years and whom I can't with conscience discharge—is so endlessly meddling. I had my accounts spread out. The whole world would know of our butter bill if she'd been in the room even a second! But sit down, child, there, near the fire. There's quite a chill in the air to-day. Spring seems especially laggard, and I'm always impatient for its coming. Percival, will you ring, please?"

I watched him as he walked—rather weakly—toward the bell that was by the wall. Then Roger and William came in to settle by the small grate within which a coal fire fluttered. Roger said a loud, hearty "Hello, Percival, and how's the boy to-day?" But he received no answer. William only nodded to his sick brother. Toki—a sleek-haired Japanese—came in with the tea then, and I saw him exchange a look and a smile with William. To the rest he was the attentive servant. I had a curious and growing impression as I sat there of the divides that may be beneath one roof. Roger and his mother were evidently fast friends. I had seen him kiss her as he reached the tall front doors. William was no one's friend—except Toki's. I couldn't tell about Percival.

"That will be all, Toki," I heard

my aunt say. Then she turned to me: "Cream or lemon, dear?"

And I said: "Lemon, and two lumps, please."

I WONDERED whether there would be a moon that night! For something about the feeling in the house disturbed me a little. Roger gave me my tea, and William passed me a sandwich. Then suddenly Percival spoke.

"She mustn't stay," he chanted in a monotonous, level voice.

"N-now, now," Roger broke in soothingly.

My aunt put in a whispered "Don't pay any attention to him, Angelica."

"Strange things—horrible things—happen in this house," Percival went on. "Let her go," and he turned to his mother. She laughed.

"Do you want your tea downstairs with us, Percival," she asked, "or would you rather go up?"

I saw him shrink in his chair. Roger gave him a cup of tea, and when Percival took it I noted the trembling of his hands, for the cup jiggled on its saucer until a little tinkling staccato tune broke the silence that had crept over us. Outside, a wind had risen and made a wail in some old, worn fir trees that I had noticed as I came in.

"Rain," said William.

"What a pity!" my aunt said. "The moon is full, and I wanted Angelica to see how it looked on the water this first night. We have quite a view of the ocean," she went on to me, "from the east room."

"The East Room!" Percival echoed in an undertone. And his head dropped back against the chair and he closed his eyes.

Roger looked at me and raised his brows, and his lips formed an only half-whispered "Not—very—w-well to-day."

By dinner-time the mood engendered by the antagonism between the human beings in the house was intensified. I was horribly ashamed of it, and I tried to brush it aside with reason, but it clung. The solidity of the low doors and my aunt's locking so many of them gave an impression of stealth and secrecy that even her vibrant brightness could not quiet.

The East Room, in which the ghost stalked when the moon was invisible, was mine, and I dressed in it rather nervously.

"I *am* a fool!" I told myself more than once when the scrape of a trumpet vine that grew outside one of my windows made me jump. But the assertion didn't help me! Then as I was dressing my hair—a rather long rite, as I have too much hair—I heard the first, far-apart drops of rain beating against the windows, and then it came fast, driven by the wind, and that same wind made the old pines writhe until they groaned. When this happened I almost prayed that the next day would be fair, and that I would soon have a renewed grip on my momentarily departed calm! But evidently the night was to be wild, for the wind grew bolder and the rain increased. And I was forced to realize that there would be no moon.

DRESSED, I surveyed my white-clad self in a long mirror that was between the windows. I would do, I decided, and I smiled to think of the admiration I would soon see in Roger's naïve, honest eyes. He would probably tell me I looked "pretty," while another man—one of Mr. Cassell's type—would whisper of "moonbeams" or "lotus flowers." I prefer the "pretty"! Then my smile went out and I forgot my preference in the expressions of men, for across the bottom of my mirror I saw a

picture traced in a thin layer of dust that evidently had not been disturbed for some days. Wondering a little, I stooped to look at this, and I saw a skull and cross-bones.

"Percival," I thought, "who doesn't want me here."

But despite this explanation I felt an added depression. For I couldn't know, of course, whether Percival had drawn that successfully gruesome small cartoon, or whether it was a part of those things which Percival had said happened in the house.

ONLY William was in the drawing-room when I reached it, and he was pacing to and fro as he smoked in a nervous way.

"Rested?" he asked me. I said I was. He nodded. "Funny thing," he said. "I was quite certain I saw Cassell when we went through the village. If it wasn't he, it was a man who looked so like him that it was—remarkable."

"We left him in New York this morning," I pointed out.

Again William nodded, and he murmured, "Um . . ."

My aunt came in then, and I gave her the package Mr. Cassell had sent her. I watched her open it, I'm afraid, with a little prying wish in my mind to understand those letters and that blotter. But when she opened it she dismissed them with a laugh.

"That boy!" she said, and again she laughed. Then she sobered enough to say:

"You have a wicked aunt, Angelica! I had quite an affair with the Captain of the *Atlantis*. To be sure, I have rheumatism and all the ills of age—in private life—but when I step out there is still, occasionally, some vigor. And that wretched boy has sent me all the news in these thick letters and on the blotter; if one can read backward, one may read: 'Your lover, my dearest, my Cassandra, and always your lover, Charles P. Dick.'"

"Thought Captain Dick's wife's name was Mary?" William offered, frowning.

My aunt became convulsed with giggles. "It is," she chuckled back of her small handkerchief. William frowned dreadfully. When Roger had joined us and had heard the tale he said to me:

"William is incensed! All the Puritans aren't dead. My mother is a good enough s-sport to enjoy this small joke on herself! She really behaved scandalously with the c-captain. But William"—Roger mocked William's long face—"looks sourly upon this sort of w-wild oat!"

"You, too, would hate all this kind of thing if you saw as much of it as I must at the office," said William stiffly.

I didn't understand, and Roger explained.

"William rules the local telegraph office," he told me. "And you've no idea of what gay play-boys are among us in the village!"

"There is a great deal that should *not* be," William stated stiffly. "If I dared tell, as I do not dare, you would believe me!"

I saw my respected aunt almost wink at Roger, who could not help but smile. I too smiled. William was so serious, so Puritanic, and the other two so gay!

"I HAVE another gift for you," I went on, "but Cousin William will hardly approve of it. Mr. Cassell gave me news of your friends to give you."

"Lovely!" my aunt said crisply. "Hope it's *bad*. Nothing's happened here for—oh, ages! Not since the

cat died in April, anyway. What is it, William? If you are in pain, you may leave."

"I am quite comfortable," he responded haughtily.

"I'll have to get the names—they're on a pad that's in my bag—in my room."

Roger offered to get it for me, but I refused his offer, knowing that his clumsy type could hardly locate one small writing-pad among many feminine things. So, without a thought to my former unrest, I ran up the stairs and, after I had traveled the upper hall swiftly, I turned the door-knob of my door. It opened easily, and I stepped across the sill.

I paused a moment, trying to remember where the switch was in that room. By the bureau, I thought. I moved toward it. Suddenly I heard the door close behind me. I felt my knees go weak. I put out a hand——

CHAPTER III

THAT EVENING

I BACKED toward my door, cautiously, trembling. At last I felt my hand close on the knob, and I knew that something was stirring near that cupboard, the door of which no one could keep closed. I tried to open the door into the hall—my one idea being to escape—and the knob would not turn. I felt it being *held* on the other side, rigidly, tightly, and out in the hall I heard hard breathing.

Percival? William? I wondered. Roger, I knew, could not do that. Even in my perturbation I realized that no ghost panted and gasped as did whatever was in the hall.

I sagged, frightened and chilled and almost breathless, against that door, the knob of which I still tried to turn with a strength that was frenzied. But the hand on the other side was stronger than mine. The knob would not give. My hand grew suddenly limp. The futility of my trying to better whatever was outside and the reaction from my maddened strength left me utterly spent and weak.

In the closet I heard scrapings. And then I saw a blue light sifting from the cracks around the door. I stood hypnotized as I watched the eerie tone of this growing illumination. Outside, the wind whipped the trees to groaning protest. The rain swished against the window-panes, beat in another direction, and then again and with renewed force battled against the glass.

I saw the blue light at the right-hand side of the closet door widen. The door was opening; slowly and with the utmost caution, but—opening. I screamed a small, stifled scream and then I gave another maddened, strong turn of the knob of the door which would take me into the hall. It turned, and I was in the hall. For a moment I stood there, perspiration breaking out all over me and in so cold a way that it made me shiver from physical reason as well as that which was mental. Then, with a deep breath, I gathered together a little of my spent strength and turned toward the stairs. I would go down and act as if nothing had happened. And I would travel the long, dimly lit hall with courage. But decisions and conduct too often differ, and as I hurried down the hall I felt as one does in those nightmares in which one's legs grow heavy and leaden and the horror that follows draws inflexibly, hideously, nearer and nearer. But at last I was on the stairs,

down which I made my trembling, unsteady descent.

WHEN I gained the drawing-room again Toki was passing a tray of cocktails. And somehow the look of those and the small dish of olives and another of caviar sandwiches made me want to scream with laughter. For, although the idea of cocktails should not spell law and order and civilization, men have made them do so through association with evening clothes and warm drawing-rooms and peace and security.

My aunt looked at me as I took a tall-stemmed glass from the tray Toki held. My hand shook so that some of the amber liquid went over the edge of the glass.

"You shouldn't run up-stairs, child," she admonished. "It's quite taxing. Sit down, darling."

Roger, a little worry on his face, pushed a chair for me toward the fire. I sank into it, gratefully. Then I looked around the room and saw that which put my suspicions of Percival away—for he was of the group, the hues of his black hair and pallid face intensified by the dead black of his evening clothes. He was watching me narrowly and, it seemed to me, hungrily.

"And now for the vicious tales," prompted my aunt.

"I couldn't find the slip of paper that has the names on it," I said, and I flattered myself that my statement sounded casual and easy.

Percival laughed; he sat huddled in his chair, laughing. William shot him an angry look. Roger shrugged his pudgy shoulders and shook his head at me, as if to excuse his brother this eccentric outbreak.

"Well, to-morrow will do, of course," my aunt said, but there was disappointment in her voice. "And of course William will be glad to miss having his shell-pink ears polluted by such a dreadful amount of—truth," she ended.

"I do not like gossip," William stated heavily and severely.

PERCIVAL still laughed silently, shaking with his laughter, huddled over in his chair, biting his nails as he shook. His eyes were fixed on me.

"Really, dear," said my aunt to him in a gently corrective way. Then she added: "You mustn't stare at Angelica so, Percival. People of our world only stare that way when they think they aren't seen."

"Let—her—stay——" he said.

"Certainly we'll let her stay," my aunt answered briskly and cheerfully. "We had no intention of doing anything else, Percival."

William's eyes narrowed as they rested on me. "I'd like to see her try to get away—now," he said.

I cowered in my chair. I couldn't help that cringing move. Again Percival's laughter increased and as it did he made the sound that goes with a stifled, inner convulsion. And not once did he look away from me.

"Dinner is served," said Toki from the doorway.

My aunt stood up.

"Always pleasant to hear," she said in that easy way which makes the most of any small topic and which tells of much social encounter. "How could the average man maintain an even half-dignified existence without dinner? Through with your cocktail, child?"

I said I was, although I had drunk but half the contents of the glass. My hands were still trembling too much to experiment be-

fore those eyes, the thoughts back of which I could not read. And something was wrong in the house, I felt certain. For all the bright chintzes and gay prints did nothing to dispel the eerie quality I felt in the air. What the "something" was I could not guess. But I knew that, of my relatives, I trusted only my aunt and Roger.

AS I stood up and my aunt went through the doorway, Percival detained me.

"I want—to show her—my curios," he chanted in his halting monotone.

"Oh, come along, Percival," William broke out sharply, and he frowned.

"Won't it keep, old fellow?" Roger asked, in his gentle way.

"I want—to show her—my curios," Percival repeated.

"Well, then, make it s-nappy," said Roger, and unwillingly I followed Percival across the room to stand with him before a crowded cabinet. Percival stooped to open a shallow drawer that was below the glass-enclosed portion of the solid piece of furniture. "Treasures are — always — hidden," he said, and looked down upon Egyptian necklaces and charms, a handful of scarabs and a few steatite plaques.

"They are lovely, Percival," I said with sincerity and warmth, and I hoped my approval would please him. But instead I saw his lips curl with a sneer, and his eyes grow dark with hate. I can't describe the sinister, unspoken threat I felt, nor the fear it put into me. Quickly, and for reassurance, I glanced toward the doorway, where Roger patiently waited, smiling a little, and William waited, openly impatient and frowning.

"Treasures — are — always—hidden!" I heard again and again. I looked down, and this time Percival drew from the back of the drawer a dagger which had on its hilt the three small emblematic monkeys which, with posture, admonish one to "hear no evil, speak no evil, see no evil." And Percival fingered it lovingly as he bent toward me, smiling and watching me through narrowed eyelids.

I made another comment—a constrained one, I imagine—I don't remember quite what I said, and then, with the utmost of relief, I turned toward my waiting cousins, who walked on either side of me toward the dining-room.

Percival followed us, and I heard his stifled, low, imperfectly choked laughter. He still shook with his merriment as we settled around the table.

"Really, Percival," said my aunt again in the same gently corrective way. I saw Toki watching Percival.

And, trying to eat, I wondered what it all meant? Why did Toki watch Percival so intently and slyly? And what did William have in common with Toki, his mother's servant?

AT LENGTH the dinner was over, and my aunt, as she rose, said:

"Hear the wind! What a lament! Angelica will not see the moon on the ocean to-night. And the view really is lovely, my dear—lovely—from the East Room!"

And again Percival laughed.

WE WENT back to the drawing-room. Toki brought in coffee which my aunt poured from a glass ball arrangement into fragile little cups. Roger passed these around awkwardly, more than once spilling

coffee into one of the transparent saucers.

"Bear!" said my aunt.

"C-can't help it," he answered. "I am what I seem—a plain, d-doddering old f-fellow. D-do my best and—s-spill the b-beans."

"N-not always," said Percival, his usual monotone lacking in his imitation of Roger's stutter. Was that monotone forgotten, I wondered, or was it a pose when used? Or were there intervals when Percival slipped back to his old, normal self? How could I tell what was real about anything?

Aunt Agnes laughed delightedly. Roger was a good enough sport to smile himself, though he flushed. William alone was annoyed.

"Percival," he said sharply, "I think you might put your lucid intervals to better and to kinder purposes."

I saw Percival's eyes brim with tears. He rose unsteadily and made his blind and groping way toward the door.

"Now," said my aunt, turning to William, "you've done it! And why—since Roger didn't mind? Heavens, William, thank God every time he turns toward sanity—no matter in what way."

"'F-fraid I f-feel the same w-way, W-William," said Roger.

Even to me William's attack upon Percival seemed uncalled for and cruel, but there was much, I knew, that I was not understanding.

"WELL, it's done!" said my aunt, as she raised her brows and shoulders at one time. "Shall we have a hand or two of bridge?"

"Th-that would be v-very nice, I th-think — if Angelica d-does," Roger responded.

I said I played a not too good game, but that I would be charmed to play if they liked, and William touched the bell.

"The table, Toki," he ordered.

Then Toki fumbled in the pocket of his white coat to bring out a letter as he said:

"Pardon lack of tray. Man, he leave this letter for you, Mr. William."

William murmured:

"Thank you, Toki." I saw his eyes narrow—I thought, slyly—with the smile he sent to the Japanese servant.

"I heard no one at the door," Aunt Agnes commented.

"Wind, he howl very much," Toki stated as he set up the table and brought the cards and the pencil and score-blanks.

"Quite true, quite true," William agreed, over-quickly. "You wouldn't hear any one to-night. Just listen to it, will you?"

We listened. And as we listened I heard a step above the drawing-room and in what was known in that house—and by some who were not in it—as *the East Room*.

One of the servants turning down my bed, I wondered, or——

"Cold, dear?" my aunt questioned. I must have shivered. Toki left the room.

I said, after my denial of chill: "Toki seems to be a very efficient servant."

William spoke again, and I knew he spoke too eagerly.

"Best ever," he asserted as he cut for deal. "Fits in so well, does so many things—arranges flowers, opens the beds each night—all that. Your deal, Angelica. How about a cent a point?"

Then the noise I had heard, I realized, had not been made by a servant opening my bed, since at that moment Toki, whose work was

to open the beds, had been in the drawing-room.

I SAID a cent a point would suit me, although with my game I imagined I would be quite a bit poorer by the end of the evening. And there was a little laughter over this that I heard dully through my absorption.

"W-William is qu-quite devoted to T-Toki," said Roger as I dealt. "H-he brought him here. D-Didn't you, William?"

William sat back from the table suddenly, shoving his chair away with an exasperated motion.

"My God!" he broke out. "How many times do I have to listen to the fact that *I* brought Toki here? It seems to me"—he laughed angrily—"that I hear it five times each day, and frequently oftener. Roger has gone to town for cooks and servants, but I don't hear that Roger has brought Jennie or Maude or Elsie here. No, instead, it's I who brought Toki here! I! *I!*"

We all looked at him, amazed. The outbreak was so absurd.

Suddenly his irritation left him and he sat looking like a pricked and expiring balloon.

"Sorry," he said in a tense, short way. "But I've had a rotten day. I was taking wires this morning, and one rather upset me." He glanced quickly at me and then away.

My aunt moistened her lips, which seemed inclined toward a smile that evidently she wanted to subdue. Her bright eyes were fixed on William. Roger picked up his hand as he said:

"Oh, all right, old chap. We all have our bad moments. . . . Mine, isn't it? . . . One diamond, you said, Angelica?"

"Two clubs," I heard. And again from above me, in the East Room, came the shuffle of some one's stealthy step.

"William," my aunt murmured as she spread out her cards, "will you look after Percival to-night if Janette needs help with him? I think it's rather your job, my dear, if you'll forgive my saying so, for if he has a bad night——" She stopped there.

William responded curtly with "Certainly I'll look after him. Don't I—much of the time?"

"W-we're not inappreciative of that," Roger put in in his gentle way. "D-don't think we are. M-my trick?"

WE PLAYED until the clock struck twelve. I'm afraid I kept them playing; in fact, I know I did. I didn't want to do what they would call "go to bed," and what I would call "go to the East Room."

At last my aunt settled back in her chair.

"You young night-hawks are too much for me," she said a little sleepily.

"W-well," Roger commented, "w-we should all sleep in spite of the w-wind. I'm going to h-have a whisky and s-soda before I g-go up."

William's lips grew straight.

"*I* have had quite enough alcohol for one evening," he stated. And over his head Roger winked at me.

The clock struck twelve. In two hours—exactly two hours—if the ghost were on time—a little ironic clause that made a pinched smile for me—in two hours I would have my visitor.

"I'll stop down with Roger while he has his drink," I said.

"D-do!" Roger invited me heartily. "Th-that would be n-no end k-kind of you. We'll m-mix up t-two

of them for f-fear one m-might be l-lonely."

MY AUNT kissed me good night and went up-stairs. William followed her, moving rather wearily and as would a man twice his age. I heard a sharp rap on one of the front windows. I jumped wildly.

"W-wind's probably b-blown d-down a b-branch," Roger hazarded. And it might have been that, I realized, as I came back to sanity.

Then I went with Roger to the dining-room, where he took a syphon, a bottle, and glasses from the cupboard. I would ask him where he slept; for, proper or not, if trouble came I was going to Roger's room for protection.

"S-say when," I heard.

I said an abstracted "Plenty!"

Then I said:

"Roger, where do you sleep?"

"N-next to your room," he stated, "and g-glad of it. Then the object of my d-dreams won't be so far away!"

"I could rap on my wall and make you hear?" I questioned, my heart actually suspended by the hope.

"T-try it!" he invited, beaming down at me.

"I sometimes have nightmares," I lied, "and get frightened."

"P-poor little girl!" Roger murmured. "Y-you hunt me up or let me h-hunt you up if you're frightened. All qu-quite proper, it'll b-be. But I d-don't want you frightened. T-two taps will b-bring the man who will s-slay the d-dragons!"

I THANKED him and, my arm through his, I went upstairs. At my door I paused, shaking, remembering that eerie light that I had seen—or that I had thought I saw. What if that were again in the East Room?

"Roger," I said, "will you come in and look under my bed?"

He roared and, patting my back, he followed me into my room and made a ridiculous but thorough search. Everything but a Bible was, I think, looked into. And after this Roger showed me where I could tap twice for him, without stepping from my bed. Then he clasped my hands in his and spoke seriously, with hardly a stutter.

"You're v-very sweet," he said, "and we do want you to be h-happy here. We want your life to be here, with us."

"I want to be useful," I said.

Smiling down at me, he said I could be. Then he said a rather conscious, inquiring, suggesting "You know, we're c-cousins——" and after that he stooped slowly and I kissed him affectionately and gratefully, for he and my aunt, as I said before, were the only two people in the house whom I did not fear—and I was learning what agony may be made by fear.

"Th-then you'll rap," he said, beaming at me, "i-if you need help?"

"Oh, I will!" I promised. And very probably — somewhere — a ghost laughed.

CHAPTER IV

THAT NIGHT

HAD no intention of going to bed. I was going to see the night through awake and up, and the next day, on some pretext, I was going to leave "Long Shadows." And for the first time since my mother's tragic death, I realized that I had one thing to be thankful for, at least, and that was the legacy that had been left my father by a wealthy Dublin uncle. This legacy had come to me ten

years before, after my father's strange death, which had been prefaced by his turning against my mother, whom he had worshipped up to that hideous point. After his death she had become an invalid, and I knew that the wonder that could never be answered in this life had had more to do with her invalidism than had the shock of his death. I had been her confidante, of course, and it was into my ears that she had poured all the bitterness that had concentrated in her when my father turned from her with a sneer, and would have nothing more to do with her.

Yes, I was independent. I realized it gratefully as I took the pins from my hair and slipped from my dress into a warm negligée. Because of the money that was mine, I could fold my tent and silently slip away.

I turned on all the lights and sat down by a small table on which were magazines. I realized that the storm had not abated, and in my nervousness I imagined strange sounds without the house. It seemed to me that a motor purred up to stop. Then somewhere a dog bayed. I felt my skin prickle.

I MOVED suddenly, for there was a jangle through the house of an old-fashioned door-bell that was both penetrating and loud. Outside my door, I heard hurried steps which dimmed on the stairs; the slam of the front door; then quiet, ominous quiet, and a little later the stealthy return of those steps. My door-knob turned, and I watched it, breathless. Then its motion ceased and again I heard the sound of the muffled steps without my door, and my heart set to a little more normal beat as I realized that the steps were retreating.

I opened a magazine and tried to read a poem, but without much success. Roger, good old, solid Roger, was in the next room, I realized. Nothing could hurt me. Again I moved suddenly. I was certain I had heard something fall in that closet. The magazine slipped from my knees to the floor, and I sat motionless and tense, staring at that closet door. I tried to remember where Percival's room was so that I might suppose that noise to be of his making during a restless night.

From the hall I heard the low, deep striking of a clock. One! Another hour and that closet door might open. I might hear strange noises—noises from the ghost who did nothing but—act like a ghost; and I had said I was not afraid of ghosts. Then I reminded myself of what tricks an active imagination may play on its owner, and of how weak we mortals often are about controlling that which should be our own. Hindus, I knew, could make one see trees grow on desert spots—grow in a second, leaf and bloom. But those same Hindus could not make a camera, the one true, unbiased test of reality, register these amazing horticultural feats. Something that these men put into the atmosphere made those who looked on imagine until they thought they saw.

THE hands of the small clock on my bureau were nearing half after one. I would, I decided, go sit by the wall, two taps on which would reward me with Roger's solid presence.

But I would not call him unless I had to. I would try to be brave for one night. I stood up. Something—I don't know what—made me turn. And then, my heart stopped. There was a face outside my

window; not outside either of the windows that looked upon the roof of a side porch, but outside the window that had nothing beneath it. The face was white and so thin that it suggested a skull rather than a human head.

I didn't scream. If I had, I think no one would have heard me, for at that moment the wind had risen to a shriek.

For a second a faintness made me close my eyes. When I opened them again the face was gone.

I wondered whether I had seen it; whether I had seen the green-blue eerie light that outlined the closet door, or whether it was another case of Hindus and trees growing instantaneously in desert places . . . or whether I was at "Long Shadows" or—dreaming some hideous sort of nightmare from which I would wake, dripping cold sweat and crying with gratitude for the fact of waking.

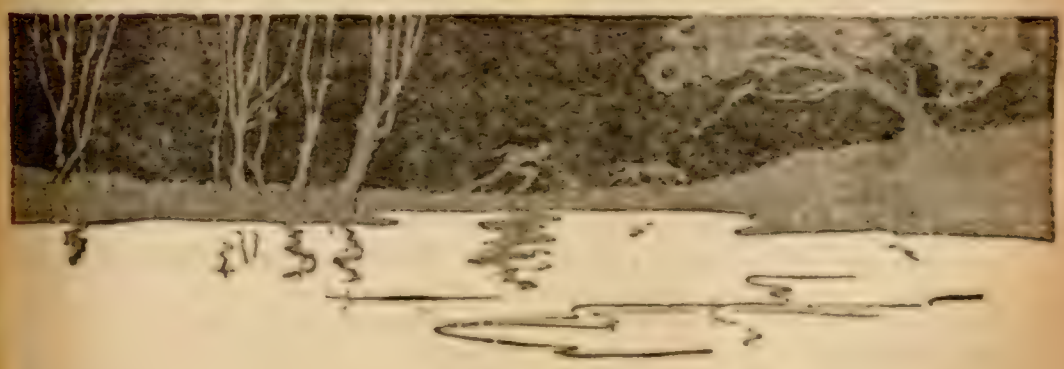
But, imagined or not, I couldn't stand it. I would call Roger. One night's sleep lost from his lifetime couldn't matter so much. And alone I might, I felt, graze madness.

SHAKING, I moved toward the wall. Suddenly the light went out. I stood paralyzed, trembling. I turned to the window again. Utter blackness was everywhere. Which way was the window? The door? I gasped suddenly. I didn't know. I was lost.

I moved. My hand touched a table. The wrong wall. I turned, trying with desperate thought to realize which way I should go. My bed? No—the bureau. Suddenly I knew where the closet door was, for again it was outlined by that faint blue light which grew deeper as one gazed at it.

The crack around the door widened. The door opened, squeaking on its hinges. The light was gone. I put my hand out. Something utterly cold closed around it. Then—I forgot.

(To Be Continued.)



A Cloak to Murder

By ROBERT W. SNEDDON

THIS is a true story of a sacrilegious assassin who used the robe of priesthood to carry out a long-cherished revenge.

Don Michael had a young and lovely wife and a younger brother who lived in the same house. The beauty of his sister-in-law led the youth to forget that she was his brother's wife, and his passion met with response.

A maidservant betrayed the secret and the husband laid an ambush and tried to murder the pair of lovers, who managed to escape and flee. The injured husband swore an oath to have vengeance; but so successful in escaping his pursuit and all the traps he laid were the fleeing lovers, that baffled fury almost brought the pursuer to the grave.

It so happened that in the town in Spain where all this happened there was a jubilee celebrated by religious rejoicings and mission work which put an end to many family feuds. Don Michael informed everybody that he had laid aside all feelings of rancor. He tried to induce his brother to meet him, but without any success.

Don Michael entered a monastery and soon gained the approval of his superiors. He was sent to Rome, and returned to Spain with the reputation of a very devout and learned man. The rank of priesthood was conferred on him and he celebrated his first mass with all pomp and ceremony.

After mass he received all his friends in the sacristy, and they pressed round him and congratulated him. He had been heard to say frequently that he deplored the hatred he had cherished for so many years against his brother, and that his only desire was to obtain pardon for the past.

Friends and relatives persuaded the erring brother to go with them on this occasion and become reconciled to the churchman. The younger man advanced toward the priest humbly and begged his forgiveness. The priest held out his arms and pressed the suppliant to his bosom.

But intead of raising his head again, the brother's knees were seen to fail, and he sank to the floor with a dreadful groan. The unholy priest, brandishing a dagger which in that embrace he had plunged into his brother's heart, kissed the still reeking blade, spurned the corpse with his foot and cried: "I have caught thee at last."

Such was the confusion and amazement of the bystanders that no attempt was made to seize the murderer, who escaped. For this crime he was banished, and fled from country to country till he found a refuge with one who committed murder on a wholesale scale—Caesar Borgia.

The ex-priest soon became high in favor and was a party to the innumerable poisonings, stabbings and stranglings which removed all who stood in the path of the ambitions of the Borgia family.

Whipping out his automatic, he pointed it at Parr.

Signal Cleverness

By WARREN ORDWAY

Forced at the point of a gun to assist a brutal murderer in his escape, there was nothing left for the fire-warden to do but acquiesce. So he put his heart and soul into caring for each detail—and therein lay his signal cleverness.

AS LOUIE RENARD, dressed like a traveling salesman and carrying a brown leather hand-bag, struggled up the steep Hart's Notch trail in the White Mountains, he might have been heard to say: "If you ever upstage me again, Flossie, good-night to you! I've got the jack now. You can play my way, or poof!" He puffed out his cheeks and blew Flossie to where she belonged.

The brown bag caught in a long, prickly bramble. "Come, you little fifty grand! Come to papa!" Louie chuckled, as he yanked the bag free. And who had a better right to chuckle, after pulling such a big bank messenger job alone? The bills were in his bag. There was no one to split with, no one to double-cross him. Louie had learned not to waste his breath on fools when that foreigner Sarle did him out of his cut on the Elton pearls, after he'd taken the risk of shooting the butler and tying old Mrs. Elton to a bedpost with a pillow-case over her mouth. All he had to do now was to get through these mountains, snatch a fast car, and make a final getaway. Then nothing to do but enjoy this old bivalve, the world, with fifty thousand dollars as an oyster-knife!

AS LOUIE puffed up a steep slope a tall man in khaki shirt and trousers came swinging down. Stopping and wiping his forehead with a

red bandanna handkerchief, the stranger asked: "Heard whether they've caught that bandit yet?"

It startled Louie a little to learn that his story had already percolated even into these deep woods.

"What bandit?" he asked, with crafty innocence.

"Didn't you hear? Fellow robbed the Eastwood Trust Company. Killed the messenger—just a boy. They say he got away with an awful bunch of dough. Last they saw of him he was streaking through Milton in a runabout, headed this way."

Louie couldn't help chuckling again. Of course he'd shot that scared kid when he fumbled for his automatic. Louie knew when a shot meant all the difference between riches and the chair, and he had no intention of kicking off just yet.

"Haven't they seen the bandit since?" Louie inquired. Measuring with his eye the distance between him and the tall stranger, Louie set down his bag. He might want both hands for that shoulder-dislocating hold, if this boob should start anything.

"That's what I want to know," the stranger answered. "Half an hour ago a dozen men with rifles and shotguns were waiting for him up in Sandown. I thought maybe you'd heard whether or not he'd been taken."

That picture almost made Louie burst into a guffaw: a dozen hicks ambushing him five miles away while he was parking his stolen car by caroming it down a cliff, then walking up this trail! A fellow who had evaded some of the best detectives in New York for a month without going two miles away from Times Square could certainly twist these farmers around his little finger!

"I hope they get the scoundrel!" Louie exclaimed as piously as he could for his mirth. "But how did you hear about it, 'way up in these woods?" he added.

"Parr told me. He's the fire-warden. Has a shack a few miles up the valley. He got it over the phone line"—pointing to twin wires strung overhead from trees. "All the government and local officials for miles around have been warned to be on the lookout for the man."

Louie smiled. It began to look interesting.

"Have they got his name or description?" he asked.

"Not yet. But Parr won't need any description. If that crook gets in this vicinity, good night!"

LOUIE enjoyed keenly the game he was playing. Of course this boob was too easy to call for any tricks such as he had played on that cop in Boston who tried to arrest him. But, still, there was always enough of the chair's dark shadow in the background to give the game zest.

"Pretty keen fellow, eh?"

"You bet he is! A young chap, but clever. He's caught more than one crook up in these mountains. He swore that if he met that bandit he'd bring him back to Corway within three hours. He's out for the reward. He's got a sick sister down Arizona way, and he could use the thousand berries."

This gave Louie one of his famous hunches. He always trusted these ideas which leaped full-blown into his mind; but the gorgeous thought which occurred to him now was so full of fascinating possibilities that he could hardly wait to put it into effect. He would induce that crook-chasing warden to help him escape! Stop with him overnight, eat supper and breakfast with him, then persuade him to lead the way through the Notch! If he could put it over, it would make

Red and Lefty and the rest of the bunch down at A Street laugh their heads off!

LOUIE was enjoying these pleasurable thoughts when he noticed that the stranger was furtively looking over his muddy shoes and trousers, his neatly patterned necktie and blue-striped shirt. The man's startled eyes rested questioningly on Louie's hand-bag, which was certainly meant for a Pullman car rather than the woods. Apparently, the stranger had recognized him. The fellow's cheeks drained of blood, and he hitched his trousers and tightened his belt as if preparing for a quick run down the trail. Clumsy boob, to give himself away! Louie's self-confidence returned.

"Say, who are you?" the stranger asked, fear roughening his voice.

Louie wished he could prolong this delightful game. It reminded him of the night he had twisted that servant girl's red wrist until she blurted out the truth about Mrs. Schuyler's diamond rings and brooch.

"Oh, I'm just up from the city for a rest," he lied.

"You are not—not——" the poor fool stuttered.

"I'm not your bandit, if that's what you mean," Louie interrupted suavely.

"Well, I must be getting on," the other man said, forcing a smile, then starting to run pell-mell down the trail.

"Don't hurry," Louie said, chuckling.

The boob didn't once look back. He might as well have told Louie he was going to blab the whole story at the first farmhouse! Louie had plenty of time to pull out his automatic and take careful aim at the bobbing khaki back.

When the echoes of the report thundered back from the bowl of the surrounding mountains, Louie saw only a limp brown bundle lying across a fallen tree trunk. He quickly dragged it to a hiding-place in the underbrush, where it would not be discovered until he was safely through the mountains and on his way.

Before starting on, Louie climbed a rock, reached up his big muscular arms and cut the telephone wires.

IT WAS nearly dark when Louie reached Parr's little cabin of rough logs. He was glad to find it surrounded by thick evergreen trees, so he could spy on the warden without being seen.

He smacked his lips when the fragrance of bacon drifted to him on the wisp of blue smoke that rose from the rusted stovepipe. Tiptoeing over to where a white sign was nailed to the logs, Louie scrutinized it in the dim light that was left. "Hart's Notch Cabin of the U. S. National Forest," he read. A federal officer, eh? That would give the adventure more kick!

Hanging from one corner of the sign was a fish-basket, with a rod standing nearby. The basket gave Louie an idea that made him smile. Setting down his bag, he took out the bills and pushed them into the basket. There was enough space left for his number plates and tools.

"You don't know it, old man, but you're going to lend me this basket to-morrow," Louie muttered, as he put everything else back into his bag.

Creeping to the lighted window, Louie pushed back a branch and peered in. After what the stranger had told him about Parr, he expected a giant woodsman who would top his own six feet and outweigh his own hundred and eighty-five pounds. What he saw made him clap the back of his hand over his

mouth to keep from laughing out loud. At one side of the roughly furnished cabin a slim young man with curly brown hair was bent over a table of hewn logs, thoughtfully reading a leather-bound notebook.

So that little fellow was the bandit-catching Parr! Louie could have broken one of his arms in his two hands.

"Duck soup!" Louie whispered. "I never expected a kidnapping job!"

When he knocked, Louie heard a chair scraping and a boyish voice saying, "Come in."

LOUIE knew how to get a man's confidence. His joviality and calculating good-fellowship opened more doors than his assortment of skeleton keys.

"Say, captain, can you give me a room with a bath here to-night? I'm a stranger, and I guess I've passed my stop."

The other man smiled engagingly. Pointing to a pile of sweet-smelling evergreen boughs on the bare earth floor in one corner, he said:

"I'm afraid you won't find it very comfortable here. I'll lend you a flashlight if you'd rather go back down the trail to Hayford's farm."

Without dropping his bag, Louie replied: "Those boughs look fine. When I get away from the office, which isn't often, I want a real change." He glanced longingly at the cot bed across the cabin.

The warden put out his slender hand, which Louie took in his great fingers. "My name's Parr, and you're welcome to anything I've got."

"Mine's Renard."

Louie had been using this name lately because some one had told him it was French for fox. If Parr hadn't appeared to be such a harmless youth Louie might have thought up a new name for his benefit. But the young warden wasn't worth that much bother.

Parr took a blue tin of tobacco down from a rough wood shelf and offered it to Louie.

"Let me have your bag, Mr. Renard, then sit down and make yourself comfortable while I rustle up some more grub."

"No, thanks. I'll smoke a tack," Louie replied, pulling out a package of cigarettes.

Then, after setting his bag carefully down beside the rough birch sapling chair, Louie stretched himself as comfortably as he could in the sagging canvas seat, lit a match, and touched the flame to his cigarette.

"Dining with a federal officer!" he ruminated, while Parr moved between the packing-box cupboard and the stove. "Eating supper with a fellow who's sworn to get me and win a thousand smackers!" Louie inhaled a long draught, letting the smoke trickle out of his nostrils.

After supper, while the two men were smoking, Louie told the story of his life, with certain amendments that only a fellow of his imagination could have supplied. The blonde waitress in Baltimore whom he had talked into a phony wedding was transformed in his telling into a lovely wife with two dear children. His work became the woolen business, which was just now rotten. The dingy room over Kaleski's which he occupied except when he had pulled a job and was flush, expanded into a stucco home in the suburbs, with lawn, shrubbery, and trees.

Parr said little except to ask a few questions about the address of his home, the names of the executives in his business, and other

such dull facts. They might have proved embarrassing to some men, but Louie turned them off cleverly with vague answers which seemed to satisfy Parr, for he simply sat there smoking and thinking.

PRESENTLY Parr looked at his watch. "Let's tune in and see what's on the air." He pulled a small black radio box toward him and handed Louie one of the earphones. "It's only a little set. Batteries are such a job to lug in. But I can get Chicago on a clear night."

"Suits me fine," Louie said, adjusting the earphones over his smooth black hair.

Parr turned the dial with expert fingers to 34. "This is my daily newspaper," he said, as a voice started droning out a list of stock quotations.

Louie swore under his breath. You could burn a newspaper and cut a telephone or telegraph wire, but there was no way of cutting the air! He looked furtively under the table for a battery connection or ground wire that he might snip if anything dangerous should come through, but all the wiring was on the table top. He could not touch it without letting Parr know exactly what he was doing.

"This is dull. Let's have some music!" Louie exclaimed roughly.

"If you can't stand it, read a magazine. There's only fifteen minutes of it, and it's the only news I ever get up here," Parr answered with a friendly smile.

"Can't you pass it up to-night? You don't get company every evening," Louie argued, softening his voice to the tone he found usually got him what he wanted.

But it didn't seem to influence Parr in the least. "There's something special I want to hear. Big robbery down in Eastwood. I heard this afternoon that the bandit's up in this country. We ought to get details to-night. I want a description of that guy."

Louie scrutinized Parr's features for any evidence of suspicion, but the fire-warden was obviously intent on the dials.

"Well, all right," Louie grunted, adjusting his earphones so he should not miss a word. He would not make the mistake of letting Parr hear anything he did not hear, too.

AT LAST the droning voice came to Youngstown Sheet and Tube Corporation, and stopped. Then: "The outstanding news event of the day was a fifty-thousand-dollar robbery . . . bank messenger was only a boy . . . brutally shot down in cold blood . . . bandit escaped in a high-powered runabout . . ."

Parr brought his clenched fist down on the table with unexpected violence. "Electrocution's too good for a brute like that!" he exclaimed.

The word "electrocution" made something jump inside Louie. A cold shiver ran down his back. But let the fellow rave! Thousands of men at thousands of radios were probably saying the same thing. But, out of them all, Louie was the only one with nerve and cleverness actually to pull the job and carry away the dough!

"I wish that fellow'd just come my way!" Parr muttered. "I'd like to get my hands on that bird!"

Louie turned away so that Parr should not see him smile. The idea of Parr's thin hands doing anything to him was ludicrous.

"Here's the description," Parr whispered ". . . dark gray suit, blue striped shirt and tie, stiff white collar, gray felt hat, tan shoes . . ."

Louie frowned, drumming his fingers nervously on the table-leg. That truck-driver must have had his eyes with him! Why hadn't he shot

him too? Without turning his head, Louie looked at Parr out of the corners of his eyes. The warden was furtively examining Louie's clothes, from his hat, hung on a nail driven into the log wall, to his shoes, fortunately smeared with black muck from a bog hole. Looking up suddenly, Louie caught Parr's prying eyes. The warden quickly bent over his radio and began fussing with a dial, but it was too late to hide his suspicions. Louie reached to see that his automatic could be pulled out of its holster instantly.

". . . carried a brown leather bag when he was seen by a resident of Eastwood, earlier in the day, entering the runabout of Jared Mullins at the corner of Park and James Street . . ." Louie observed that now Parr did not try to conceal his scrutiny of Louie's bag. Louie felt a weight in the pit of his stomach. He was not exactly worried, but a false move now might prove disastrous.

". . . from descriptions of eyewitnesses he has olive complexion, black hair, flattish nose, full lips." Louie felt a tenseness in every muscle. But he prided himself that his brain was keenest where danger was greatest. Now Parr was openly studying his features. Louie pretended to look at the radio, but out of the corners of his eyes he was watching the other as a serpent watches a bird.

Parr's hand began to move cautiously in the direction of his holster. Louie sensed that there was not a second to lose. Whipping out his automatic, he pointed it at Parr.

FOR a moment Louie thought that he would have to shoot Parr, which he did not want to do, for he could use the warden in many ways before he left these mountains. Instead of raising his hands at once, Parr sat there coolly, evidently thinking out what action to take. Louie tensed his fingers on the trigger.

Then Parr raised his hands.

Louie felt his whole body flooded with a pleasant warmth. He was beginning to get the full flavor of this little game with the terrible warden. He said fiercely:

"There's just one thing I want of you, and that's to help me get away."

"Accessory after the fact, eh?" Parr said, apparently sparring for time.

"I know you think you ought to take me prisoner," Louie taunted. "You want that thousand berries for your sick sister. But you haven't a chance in a million. Better say 'Yes' without any palaver. I'd rather have a live man helping me, even a little shrimp like you, than a dead one cluttering up this cabin."

Still Parr said nothing. He glanced around the room, his eyes resting on a calendar and on the window, as if he were considering the possibilities of escape.

"I'm waiting, but I won't wait long," Louie menaced. It reminded him of the fun they had had with a certain boy down in Philly, burning his fingers with matches until he told where his father kept his bonds.

Finally the corners of the fire-warden's mouth twisted up into a grim smile. He shrugged his shoulders.

"You've got me. What can I do but help?"

"No funny business," Louie warned, remembering Parr's glance at the windows.

"Don't worry. I'm your Man Friday from now on."

Parr sounded almost too anxious to help. Louie regarded him suspiciously a moment before jerking Parr's gun from its holster.

"That the only one you have?" he asked.

Parr nodded.

"Remember, one lie and you're a goner. Still the only gun in the shack?"

"That was not a lie," Parr replied.

Louie believed Parr, but he decided it would pay to impress the warden that he couldn't get away with anything. He prowled around the bureau made of old packing-boxes, and the box that served as a chest and the rough shelves, before he admitted, "I guess you're right."

Louie felt very well satisfied with himself as he settled back in the canvas seat of his chair.

"Don't bother to telephone headquarters. I might put a couple of bullets through you. Besides, I cut the wires."

He selected a cigarette and carefully lighted it, while Parr sat staring thoughtfully at the log wall of the cabin. A clever man must use many kinds of persuasion, Louie reflected.

PRESENTLY Louie heard Parr stirring.

"Just what is it you want me to do?" Parr asked. "I might be able to think up some plan of action this evening."

Louie smiled at this evidence of Parr's complete subjection.

"I'll do the thinking and tell you what to do. First, I want you to show me the way through these mountains," Louie said.

"I'll make a map for you," Parr promised quickly. "All you have to do is follow the path."

"And have you run back to Corway and wire the cops to watch out for me while I get lost on some blind trail? Nothing doing. I'm telling you what to do, not arguing with you," Louie snarled.

"Anything you say," Parr replied. "I'll go with you as far as you like."

Louie went on: "You've got to fix me up so I won't stand out like the government stamp on a counterfeit dollar. These clothes are a give-away. And I've got to have that fish-basket and rod of yours. This bag of mine has been spotted."

"Disguised as a fisherman! Ah, not bad," Parr admitted thoughtfully. "This time of year you ought to be able to go anywhere in such a rig without arousing suspicion."

Louie felt almost friendly toward this young chap. At least, he recognized cleverness when he saw it! But Louie couldn't afford to let Parr know this, so he replied gruffly: "You spend your time thinking how you can help me get away. If I catch you trying to double-cross me, good night!"

RETURNING to his chair and lighting a cigarette, Louie gave himself over to pleasant thoughts about how he would spend the fifty thousand dollars in his possession. Presently his reflections were interrupted by a slight rustling sound. Looking toward Parr, he noticed that the warden was quietly turning the pages of the same brown book which he had been reading when Louie spied on him through the window.

"What you got there?" Louie asked.

"Just a book with maps and such," Parr said, snapping the little volume shut.

"Let's see it," Louie commanded.

Louie glanced over the pages and found beside the maps simply information about this and that game warden and fire-warden. D. L. Somers occupied the Bear Mountain lookout. H. B. Barstow patrolled Trout Pond, Beaver Lake, Swift River, and the tributaries thereof. There were pages of such notes, to

which Parr had added detailed entries in his minute handwriting.

"What are these names?" Louie inquired suspiciously.

"I have to know where the wardens are, in case of fire," Parr explained.

"And in case of a holdup?"

"What could I do with the wires cut?" Parr asked.

"Don't you fellows signal with mirrors."

"The only mirror I have is that cracked one over the wash-basin," Parr said. "You couldn't throw a beam with it. But if you're worried, here goes."

Picking up a hammer from the table, he walked quickly to the mirror, and before Louie could stop him had smashed it into bits.

The sound of the glass tinkling on the wash-basin and table set Louie's nerves on edge. He realized that Parr had shown his absolute submission, yet he could not keep back a feeling of depression at this omen of bad luck. Pulling himself together, he commanded Parr curtly: "Burn the book!"

Louie stood over Parr while he poked the book into the heart of the glowing wood fire in the stove.

When Louie returned to his chair he felt tired and gloomy. The long walk up the hard trail had fatigued him. The difficulties he would meet to-morrow began to loom larger. He would be in constant danger until he had put a day's run in a fast car between himself and these mountains. He realized that what he needed was a good night's rest if he was to have his usual keenness of mind.

"I'm sorry, Parr, but I guess I'll have to tie you up for the night. I want to turn in," he said.

"I won't do you any harm," Parr promised.

"No danger," Louie said with a chuckle. "Get a rope. And you might hand me your flashlight while your hands are free."

Louie roped Parr's slender wrists and ankles, seated him on the boughs in the corner, and fastened the ropes securely to a log in the cabin wall. Then, tucking the flashlight under the pillow of the one bed and blowing out the kerosene lamp, Louie threw himself down on the quilt.

"The floor wasn't too good for me. I guess you can stand it," he said, with a sneering laugh.

THE darkness and quiet of the woods, broken only by the distant hoot of an owl and the melancholy sighing of the pines, soothed Louie. To-morrow's problem could be met to-morrow. Now, at least, he felt safe. Soon he fell asleep.

He was startled awake by a strange noise, like a man making short strokes in wood with a file or saw. Grind, grind, grind! Silence! Grind, grind, grind! Louie sat up straight, staring into the blackness. Two gray squares showed where the windows were, but afforded no light. Grind, grind, grind! His body grew taut with the realization of the dangers that surrounded him. If Parr should unloose the ropes and get away he could summon help in three hours. And if Louie tried to escape he might wander helplessly in the black woods until he was trapped like a rabbit.

Reaching for his gun and flashlight, Louie aimed at the point from which the sounds came, and pressed the button, flooding the cabin wall with a circle of light.

"What are you doing there?" he shouted.

"Oh!" Parr cried from the opposite side of the cabin, his voice shrill with the instinctive fear of a man who is startled out of a doze. Louie

turned his flash. The light showed Parr still hunched in his corner on the boughs. "What's the matter?" he asked.

"That noise," Louie said, as the grind started again.

"Oh, that! Only my pet hedgehog. He comes around every night. Gnaws everything he can put his teeth into."

Walking quickly out of the cabin, Louie easily found the dazed creature with his flashlight. One shot ended the danger of its gnawing Parr's ropes.

Louie smiled at his fears. He was as safe here as in his own bed in Kaleski's front room. Again he sank back on his fragrant balsam-filled mattress. In two minutes he was asleep once more.

NEXT morning, after Parr had been released and had cooked a breakfast of bacon and coffee, with two last precious eggs for his guest, Louie said:

"Well, let's get to business. Fix me up so I'll not be noticed in the woods."

"I think your suit will do," Parr said. "It's the collar and shirt that give you away."

"Can't you fix up a coat for me?" Louie could hear again that voice on the radio describing his gray suit.

"Don't wear one. A flannel shirt is all you need this weather."

"What size shirt do you wear?" Louie asked skeptically.

"Fourteen and a half, but——"

"You can't crowd my seventeen neck into a boy's size shirt," Louie snorted derisively.

"I was going to tell you. I have a shirt some one lent me once, when mine got burned in a forest fire." After rummaging in a box under the table which served as a closet, Parr brought out a roomy flannel shirt, flashily patterned with big red and black checks. "Try that on."

Louie took the shirt suspiciously. "That's as noisy as a Browning gun in Chicago," he said.

"They all wear 'em up here," Parr reassured him. "And don't you want to look as different from yesterday as you can?"

Louie considered the shirt. Parr's argument sounded logical. The fact that it would start a riot on Broadway was no reason why it might not be a perfect camouflage here. Pulling it over his head, he found it fitted him well enough, though he had to leave the top button open at the neck. Louie noticed that it was considerably worn and had a hole burned in the pocket, probably by a hot coal from a lighted pipe. But it was the sort of shirt a fisherman might wear. Picking up a bit of the broken mirror from the earth floor, he examined himself as best he could. His mouth widened into a smile. "Say, I'm some he-man from the great open spaces, eh?" he commented.

"You might try my rubber-soled moccasins," Parr suggested. "They are made to wear over woolen socks, so they ought to fit."

Louie easily pulled on the big, soft, elk-skin moccasins and surveyed his feet with a grin. He certainly had this terrible warden eating out of his hand!

Parr hung his creel-strap over Louie's shoulder, and, after disjointing his rod, handed it to Louie. "Will you please send this back parcel post?" he asked. "I've fished with it since I was a kid, and I'd hate to lose it."

"Sure," Louie agreed carelessly, wondering how he could most easily get rid of it once he was out of the woods. The little warden was doing so well, he might as well keep him happy, especially since all it needed was a word.

After transferring the bills and

tools from his hand-bag to the creel, Louie asked Parr what a fisherman would pack over a mess of fish.

"Ferns or moss," Parr said. "You can get all you want by the spring, down by that clump of birch trees."

"Lead the way," Louie ordered. At the spring he let the warden pack the creel.

"You're sure that's all right?" he asked suspiciously, as Parr tucked a last fragrant fern over the top and closed the willow cover.

"It's the same as after I've been fishing in the river," Parr assured him.

"NOW get me through these mountains as quick as you can. And no funny business," Louie ordered. Pulling out his gun and pointing it at Parr's feet, Louie commanded crisply: "Now, allay!" It made him smile to see how quickly the warden started up the trail with his long strides.

Parr led the way beside the brook which foamed down over rocks and gravel bars. As they climbed the narrowing valley, the trail became less and less marked. The brook narrowed until it was finally only a silent trickle between great boulders, black with slippery moss. Branch trails forked from the path they followed, causing Louie to congratulate himself that he had had the cleverness to get this experienced woodsman for a guide.

About four miles from the cabin Parr struck off the main trail onto a dimly marked path leading up a steep bank to the right.

"I thought you told me to follow the main trail through the Notch," Louie said suspiciously.

"This takes you out on Philbrown brook. It'll look better to come out there with your fishing rig."

"Sounds reasonable," Louie admitted, grinning at the way he had this young officer working his head off to get him safely through the woods.

The new trail led them to a broad expanse of cut-over tableland, gleaming with gnarled, whitish stumps and ringing with the notes of a bird that whistled a melancholy series of descending notes. It occurred to Louie that if he shot Parr in this desolate spot the warden's body might not be found for weeks. But he had not yet come to the place where he dared risk picking his own way through the maze of old logging roads and paths. He let Parr lead on through a second growth of birch and maple, down a declivity to the babbling brown water of Philbrown brook.

Louie had a moment of uneasiness when he saw ahead a khaki-clad fisherman casting his fly on a broad pool near a clump of alders. It seemed impossible that the fellow could identify him in his bright-colored shirt; yet the danger, if he should suspect, was great. Gripping the automatic in his side pocket, ready for instant action should Parr make the slightest hostile move, he grunted: "You do the talking."

"What luck?" the fisherman called as they came abreast of his pool.

"Not much," Parr replied. "We thought we'd try it lower down."

Louie relaxed his hold on the gun. His lips parted in a satisfied smile.

"Cast in here! You'll fill your basket in no time," the angler shouted.

"We'll start in down below you," Parr said.

"If you want to fish here, don't mind me. I've got all I want. Look!" The fisherman opened his creel, letting Louie and Parr see the flashing silver and black of his trout.

"Say, that's great!" Parr exclaimed, with real enthusiasm. Then, evidently recalling his position, he

added: "We'll sure have to dip in down below a piece."

Louie chuckled to himself as they started again down the trail. To use this warden for blocking the curiosity of strangers as well as guiding the way was a stroke of cleverness the fellows at Kaleski's would appreciate!

"That's the stuff," he commented pleasantly to Parr.

LATE in the morning they came to the top of a high granite cliff fringed with stunted evergreen trees and overlooking a deep valley. Directly below them, near the base of the cliff, was an open field with a few gnarled apple trees which showed that once it had been a farm. Beyond, the Philbrown could be seen winding through the woods to a broad valley, in which the gray roofs and white spires of a town glistened in the sunlight. Louie sighed with relief. Within an hour he would be stepping on the accelerator of a fast car, headed north.

"That's Epping," Parr said. "Perhaps you'd rather go the rest of the way alone."

"Yes, and let you run around through the woods and spread the alarm!" Louie taunted.

"I'll stay here," Parr promised.

"I almost believe you!" Louie exclaimed. "But I'll tell you what we'll do. Walk with me to that open field below the cliff. Then you climb back here and wave to me. That'll be my signal to go on."

When they had clambered down to the rough grass and brambles that marked the old hayfield, Louie pulled out his automatic. "I suppose I ought to kill you now," he said reflectively. "I've got all I can out of you, and you might do me harm later."

"What good would it do to shoot me?" Parr asked coolly. "Some fisherman would be sure to hear the shot. I'll go back up the cliff. Watch me all the way, if you like. I'll stay there till you have time to get down to the road. Even if I came down right away, you'd still have plenty of time to make your getaway."

Louie considered this proposition while he covered Parr with his gun. Though he was still suspicious, the little warden had been so consistently helpful so far that he was inclined to take his suggestion at its face value. Give him a little head start, and it would be a cinch to slip out of this country before any one was the wiser. Louie knew by experience how to select a fast car of a make so common that it would not be noticed. He could put on his own number plates in two minutes. He nodded thoughtfully. Parr might be right. The poor little chap was hardly worth the risk of shooting. If he got the federal government after him, he would never feel safe anywhere. There was Mel Wilbor, as clever a fellow as ever lived, sent to Leavenworth for fifteen years after a mail holdup in Idaho.

Louie slowly put up his gun. "Get!" he ordered laconically.

Turning, Parr clambered quickly up the trail.

Louie felt so sure of the young warden that almost as soon as Parr's back was turned he started running down the trail toward the village. Half-way down the valley, through the foliage of the beech trees, he could see Parr, a tiny speck against the blackness of the evergreens fringing the cliff. He was still standing there when Louie walked around a bend in the trail which put the shoulder of a hill between him and the warden.

SOON Louie began to hear through the trees the occasional roar of a passing car on the highroad. The

trees and bushes became gray with dust. Through the underbrush he could see the white ribbon of dusty gravel. A countryman in a shabby gray suit and high rubber boots was sitting on the running-board of a dilapidated flivver, idly whittling a stick to a needle point. For a moment Louie considered taking that car and driving it until he could find a faster one; but he decided against it. The old can wouldn't travel over thirty, probably. He would pass this simple idler with a nod, and walk to where he could choose the kind of car he wanted.

When the countryman saw Louie he folded his knife, stood up and waited. He was a man between thirty and forty, muscular and strongly built.

"What luck?" he asked, his tanned face lighting up with a smile.

"Not much," Louie parroted Parr's phrase, as he approached the other man.

The countryman's keen gray eyes roved inquisitively over Louie's clothes.

"Say, that's a right smart shirt you're wearin'," he finally remarked. "Mind tellin' me where you got it?"

"In Boston," Louie replied shortly, to humor the fellow, yet not open the way for a delaying conversation.

The other man stepped out to the middle of the path as if for a chat, though he did not look like the usual loquacious countryman. Louie cursed the man under his breath. It would be dangerous to attempt to knock down a husky of his weight and strength. And to shoot him here on the main road, with cars passing every minute or two, would be foolhardy. Best cut the talk as short as possible and move on.

"Funny! Looks like a shirt of mine," the countryman said, rubbing the red flannel sleeve between his big brown fingers. "Mine was burned through the pocket, too, where I put away a corncob pipe without knocking it out."

"A common enough habit. I've spoiled several shirts that way," Louie invented.

"I lent my shirt to a fellow once. I thought maybe he'd lent it to you," the stranger said mildly.

Though Louie could not stop to analyze this statement, it troubled him vaguely, and he recalled certain things Parr had told him of this shirt. His instinct warned him to be on his guard.

"There are thousands of shirts like this, I suppose," Louie said, forcing a laugh.

The man next unceremoniously took Louie's rod in his hands and examined the fine red silk windings, a few of which had been repaired with coarse yellow silk by a bungling amateur hand.

"I had a friend who owned a rod like that once. Get that in Boston, too, Mister?"

"Sure," Louie answered, snatching back the rod and holding it behind his body. "Sorry, but I've got to get along," he said, starting toward the road.

THE countryman suddenly came alive like a dozing cat when a dog appears. With a quick motion of his strong hand, he roughly seized Louie's arm.

"Just a minute, Mister," he said, with a hint of authority in his voice.

The man's commanding tone and his firm grip on Louie's arm made Louie's nerves jump. Had he recognized Parr's shirt and rod? Did he know Parr? Louie felt the blood pounding in his neck. He was filled with a deep instinctive fear that all his knowledge of his own keen wit and cleverness could not overcome.

"What do you want?" Louie asked sharply. His fingers were already tense with the purpose to shoot this man. But a big motor truck, swinging around a bend in the road, recalled the danger of firing a shot on such a traveled highway.

"I only want to see your fish, Mister," the man replied in a businesslike tone.

"You don't have to grab my arm!" Louie exclaimed. The feel of the man's powerful fingers through his sleeve made him shiver. But the countryman did not relax his hold.

In a gust of panicky anger, Louie shook his arm free of the other's clutching fingers. "You go to the devil!" he cried. Holding his left hand protectively over his creel, he started to push past.

"Oh, it's all right. My name's Barstow. I'm the game warden." The countryman pulled aside the lapel of his coat. Louie found himself staring at a silver star lettered "Deputy Sheriff." Dropping his rod, he reached for his gun. But before he could even touch it, the sheriff's hand had gone past the star to a holster under his left armpit. Louie's diaphragm tightened when he saw the quick glint of the sheriff's gun describing an arc between the sheriff's holster and his own ribs. A cold shiver chilled his limbs and made his knees weak and trembly. Before him rose a picture of gray stone walls, a grim chair. Slowly he raised his hands.

Then, in this extremity of danger, Louie felt his keen mind coming to his rescue.

"There's no use making all this fuss about a few fish," he said, smiling, and throwing into his voice all the hearty good-nature he could summon. "The fact is, I haven't a trout. I didn't want to confess I was whitewashed by this stream. Here, look!" Louie held the cover of his creel open long enough to let the sheriff see the carefully arranged moss and ferns. "Put up your gun, old man. The fight's over," he laughed.

"You may be right, Mister, but the State hires me to find any short trout caught in these waters. And I never yet saw a man with short trout put 'em on top. So I'll just feel around your creel, if you don't mind."

"That's all right, brother. But put your iron away. It tickles my ribs," Louie said as banteringly as he could for the fear which clutched at his heart. If he could not disarm the sheriff before he discovered the bills in the creel, Louie knew he was gone! He couldn't shoot, couldn't make a move while that gun was pointing at him. Only let the sheriff once drop his gun, or even relax his aim, and Louie wouldn't hesitate. His hand was tense, ready to grip his own gun and shoot to kill.

But the sheriff did not relax his grip, nor did his aim at Louie's heart waver. As he began fumbling among the ferns in Louie's basket, Louie watched his eyes. If those keen gray eyes had dropped even for an instant, Louie would have taken a hundred-to-one chance and reached for his gun. But, desperate as he was, he realized that to make the slightest move would be sheer suicide.

Louie could see a flicker of satisfaction in the sheriff's eyes when his fumbling fingers touched the package of bills hidden under the ferns. Holding it in his left hand where he could identify it, and still keeping Louie's face under his catlike scrutiny, he nodded with evident self-approval.

"And I never saw a fisherman come out of this stream with bone

dry feet, either," he said, smiling grimly.

Dropping the bills into his roomy pocket, he ordered: "Hold out your hands."

Louie felt his body grow limp. Already he could feel the chill of stone walls; he could hear the tramp of marching feet down a stone corridor. Slowly, as with great effort, he extended his hands toward the sheriff. A click, and he felt the steely grip of handcuffs around his wrists.

AN hour later, after a scramble through the woods and a ride in a borrowed car down to the county seat, Parr walked into the massive granite building that housed the courthouse and jail. As he expected, he found Deputy Sheriff Barstow there before him.

"Did you get that crook they described over the radio last night?" Parr asked.

"Sure did!" Barstow exulted. "I saw your tracks all over him, too. That shirt I lent you when you burned yours in the forest fire, your rod and creel, your moccasins. The fool kept telling me he bought 'em in Boston. That made me suspicious right away. I didn't ask him for his license, because it would have put him on his guard. Just went for his roll, which I figured would be in that old creel of yours. I aim to split the reward fifty-fifty with you, if that's agreeable."

"I don't deserve a cent, after I let him get the drop on me last night," Parr replied. "But when I thought it over, I figured that if I could convince the crook I was trying to help him, I could work out a set of signals that would flag you. It's lucky I checked up first thing on where you were patrolling to-day. When he saw me studying my notebook, he smelled a rat and burned it. He got suspicious of a mirror, too—but there are plenty of ways to signal a pal that aren't in the manuals!"

WAS HOUDINI A MEDIUM?

Sir Arthur Conan Doyle, one of the foremost of present-day Spiritualists, claims he was.

In the December issue of MYSTERY STORIES you will find an article by Sir Arthur that will hold your interest, make you think and give you the desire to argue with your nearest neighbor.

Don't miss reading this feature by the famous author of those intriguing SHERLOCK HOLMES stories.

HOUDINI THE ENIGMA

by Sir Arthur Conan Doyle

Several rose as if they meant to rush him.

The Spy Master

By RICHARD WILMER ROWAN

This is the first of a series of stories in which lives one of the most picturesque and ruthless of the fictional figures inspired by the Great War—the notorious Spy Master. Pompous, vain, arrogant, yet of exceeding cunning, Conrad Von Karl directs destinies with a flippant nonchalance and metes out a most peculiar justice.

1. A Most Derisive Mercy

THE Casino was crowded at this hour. Having taken my own consent for granted, my fair companion led me through the throng to a table of roulette, where presently we secured places side by side.

"Ma'm'selle Diane Duplessis," Marin had said in presenting me to this strikingly beautiful girl. But only because of my friend's introduction did I credit her with resources of character and income manifestly lacking in other young ladies of elegance and charm whom I saw all about me in this vast salon of chance.

Very dull was the play at our table, and such modest wagers as she and I made added no fever of excitement. A young Englishman and an American girl — friends — began contending with rather more reckless sums. But suddenly my companion excused herself and left me, and I thought I discovered

agitation to a degree in her voice as she murmured a request that I wait for her.

The Englishman won, his pretty comrade affecting dismay. Then in turn she bet—and lost. And after that both of them gambled with varying success and with a good deal of merriment and pose.

It was very minor drama, this, in an evening thus far uneventful. Most of the spectators, assured of Monte Carlo's sensational merits, endeavored to enjoy it.

AND then a perceptible change! Flooding around me among these roulette watchers there seemed now a wave of excitement. Being seated, I could see nothing. No large sum lay stacked upon the green cloth. What was disturbing them? What did they anticipate?

The wheel was spinning again.

"Quatorze," said a deep voice.

Who was it? Directly back of me a voice of harsher tone asked in German: "That is the maharaja from the great gray yacht, *nicht wahr?"*

I craned my neck, for I had seen such a vessel coming to anchor that morning.

"Nein—nein!" was the hoarsely murmured reply. *"Er ist Conrad von Karl."*

Von Karl! Already well-acquainted with his sinister life and unscrupulous works, was I destined here to meet the notorious one in person?

Others were pressing upon my chair, leaning forward eagerly to see. The wheel and the tiny white ball whirled on, but none now paid them the slightest attention.

Von Karl—without any formal description. I would yet have been sure of him. And I could sit and study him while a way was opened to him by involuntary deference from the eager and curious—whom he ignored: gamblers, idlers, sightseers, parasites, and pilgrims.

A LARGE man, he stood an inch above six feet, solidly muscled, broad-shouldered and deep of chest. A peasant ancestry, thought I, showed in his build—but moulded and refined in Bond Street, in Savile Row and other sartorial centres, and by well-considered exercises blended with all possible luxuries and ease. His complexion was dark, but with a vivid, healthy flush beneath the skin. None familiar with the East would mistake him for a Hindu, yet he contrived to look the maharaja. With his immaculate evening dress, he wore a rich green turban, an immense emerald flashing from its subtle folds.

On his lapel he flaunted the Turkish Order of the Nishani-Medjidie. His shirt-stud was a large pearl of wondrous lustre. Even the buttons of his white gloves gleamed with jeweled incrustation. His hands, for all their garb and polite deportment, I noticed more because of their evident strength.

The face of Conrad von Karl was a memorable mask. A handsome man—the sort whom women and men alike mistrust! Yet women endowed with an active, reckless curiosity would find in his eyes promise of diverting adventures. His jaw was strong, his nose arrogant, decisive; and though the large, dark eyes could be provoking or metallic or reptilian, the eyebrows, like silken arches, and the long fine lashes were almost effeminate.

One flaw—on the left cheek, a small and oddly coiling scar. The brand of the sergent? A mark of the *duello?* Or perhaps the immutable kiss of a jewel in a lady's ring.

"*Quatorze*," he repeated.

But it was several moments before any one, even the croupier and his assaistants, noted the wheel's slowing down. And then, when fourteen was declared to have won, it did not seem the lucky guess of a newcomer, but rather the fulfilment of majestic prophecy.

With a gesture more amiable than contemptuous Von Karl wagered a thousand francs on nineteen. "It is the year that is running to-night," said he. "Nineteen—and fourteen. Fourteen and nineteen. We shall see. A fateful year, perhaps!"

MANY times thereafter I was to see him in many a situation—posing or profiteering in drama or in real peril, going down to disaster, rising to a peak of cruel success. I was to know this strange man in many guises, with many accents, by numerous sudden revelation. Yet the Conrad von Karl I always think of first is the one that I saw first: standing there impregnably—a conspiring colossus at play, a master of intrigue stealing half an hour's relaxation—nonchalant and formidable, fantastic, too, and corrupt, compelling, betting upon the year, on nineteen and on fourteen, over and over; and with brief exertion winning upward of eighty-five thousand francs.

He was pleased with himself and his fortunes. As he raked in his gains, there was no sign of fictitious *ennui*, of boredom, of an ill-concealed greediness—the commoner traits I had noticed among most winning bettors. Gaily he stripped off his right glove, the better to handle his new riches, so that I now had my first glimpse of his finger-nails, manicured and brilliantly polished, but without rouge, for he affected a special blue-green paste of his own, which imparted a ghastly coloring that he alone could relish.

He won expansively. He lost with a chuckle. Like the ever enlarging, gaping throng now committed to roulette, I simply stared at him—though, unlike so many of them, I permitted myself no attempt to ape his successful play. I simply stared—and if Diane Duplessis returned I never noticed her. Even Von Karl's own companion, a dazzling blonde creature who looked English but spoke in French or German, I recalled only when I encountered her again another day.

"There! My nineteenth play!" he exclaimed. "I have won fourteen times! That signals the end. . . ."

Here was no exact calculation, I knew; but it served him well, snapping the thread of lucky sport adroitly. The croupier and the other table-attendants he tipped lavishly. He was smiling broadly as he pocketed his final winnings. I noted a muscular twitching above the right eye, as though even his nerve reflexes were ironically celebrating. When he turned away with his blonde companion, two-score crowded after them, following as if at the heels of a demi-god.

Would he play elsewhere? I remembered Diane and so tarried according to her plea. But roulette was a dull hazard now. I placed two *louis* on fourteen—and won, in honor of Von Karl. But this gain of mine was presently dissipated. And then Mlle. Duplessis reappeared at last, her expression so anxious that I began to feel strangely guilty and even to dread events that seemed to be requiring me to play a part with no rehearsal.

"Will you come away with me at once?" she urged.

"What has happened?" I asked. "Is it Marin?"

"The very worst for him," said

she, but would add nothing more while we hurried from the Casino to my friend's hotel, each quick step of the way deepening my concern.

PAUL MARIN I had accounted my intimate friend since our post-graduate year together at the university. I knew him to be an officer highly esteemed in the counter-espionage service of France. In 1912, when the Balkans were aflame with war, I had been able to assist him in a curiously simple manner, permitting him to journey obscurely to Belgrade, Sofia, and Bucharest as my French valet. Since then I had more than shared his confidence. By way of an official recognition, I had received from Major Bertrand, his superior, the thanks of the Republic for such aid as I had rendered in those days of vast intrigue.

When I met him in Monte Carlo late in February, 1914, I had no idea that Europe would soon be rushing to arms. But his presence made me think that matters relating to the peace of Europe were on the march.

My companion, to whom Marin had introduced me, did not lead to his suite, but to a larger one on the second floor. By the door a gendarme stood guard. He stopped us politely, but with no lack of resolution. Then Marin himself appeared, and at his word we passed in.

"He is still alive," my friend said to Diane.

On tiptoe she crossed the ornate parlor we had entered and opened another door gently. It appeared to lead into a bedroom, and as she went in I caught a glimpse of a bearded man in the white garb of a surgeon. Who was hurt?

"It is Legendre of our Foreign Office," Marin explained, his keen face haggard. "About half an hour ago he was stabbed—a mortal wound, they fear. He is unconscious——"

"Von Karl!" I exclaimed.

He checked me with a swift gesture. "Von Karl had already seen Legendre," he said in a whisper. "That is why the Quai d'Orsay sent a man like Legendre to Monaco. That is why I am here. Von Karl came to receive the bid of France."

"Auctioning himself off?"

"He controls a private secret service of his own. In the event of a general European war he would be worth an army corps to the nation that engaged him. He has many enemies, vengefully active. And we knew we must outwit the spies of several powers, who would stop at nothing to prevent this negotiation with Legendre, should they learn of it in advance."

I described what I had seen of Conrad von Karl at the gaming table, and mentioned his success.

"What a man! He wins a small fortune while awaiting official promise of a larger one," Marin said. "He had seen Legendre, and they had talked for half an hour. Legendre was to telephone to Paris. In two hours they were to meet again, when Von Karl would receive his answer, confirmed by the highest authority." An independent principality, Monaco had been chosen, I gathered, as the ideal neutral ground for what was deemed a momentous secret conference.

"What can I do to help?" I said.

He shook his head regretfully. "What can any one do? Only the two of them know what transpired, or what terms were proposed. Legendre was mysteriously struck down before the call to the Ministry had been put through," he explained, adding that he had acted at once,

sending a code report of Legendre's wound to Paris, the while prosecuting a search for evidence likely to expose the assailant.

"Von Karl seemed to be purposely displaying himself," I observed. "Since so few could know of the meeting, might not his complicity lie in gambling while an accomplice, with a knife——"

"But why," Marin interrupted, "should any man desire the assassination of one who is trying to pay him three million francs?"

"Then the terms were not unknown?"

"Legendre confided to me that three millions were his maximum allowance. Von Karl is strictly the professional, an expert at his game, which is not only espionage, but the enlistment and direction also of a network of lesser spies. He knows his worth, and knows that we can estimate it. Be assured that he would contrive to reach the maximum."

"And Ma'm'selle Duplessis?" I questioned.

"Diane is one of our most useful secret agents," Marin told me. "I had supposed you would guess that."

WITH a new appreciation I studied her now as she came quietly from the room where a life was ebbing away. Even more than the theatre, the counter-espionage service requires women whose careers are associated with it to meet high standards of beauty, fashion and charm. Diane was surely a treat to the eye. Looking not more than twenty, she dared to admit twenty-four, an age the more probable in view of her evidently high standing in the difficult French service. She seemed tall, but really she was not, nor a usual Latin type; she was slender and graceful, with hair a glistening bronze. Her use of cosmetics was an art; her dressmaker, her hairdresser, artistic geniuses both. Or perhaps she was the one who added the genius. Her black evening gown clung to her figure like a wet bathing suit. Displaying no rings, she wore one platinum bangle on her left arm. A superb aquamarine necklace complemented the severity of her dark costume, and ear pendants matched these most brilliant of beads in well-imagined, splendid ensemble.

"You are wanted, Captain," said she to Paul Marin. "They are going to try a blood transfusion. Gaston and I have volunteered, but your permission is necessary."

"Gaston," was Marin's instant choice. "I need you," he told her, and left us alone together.

She asked me about Conrad von Karl, and I depicted the scene she had missed.

"We all were summoned here after the stabbing was discovered," she explained. "A kind of general alarm. I had expected merely to cover the Casino as usual to-night." And even now her intensity and agitated manner amazed me. "We must not lose Von Karl like this," she murmured. "We dare not. Marin, myself, all of us attached to this mission, will be ruined if it fails in this way. M. Legendre fully understood the risk he ran. If he had to die to secure Conrad von Karl for France, he would not measure the sacrifice. . . ."

I was shocked and astonished, and I showed it. "Surely you overemphasize the importance of this one man!" said I. "He's a clever plotter, no doubt, but also a great poseur, a traveling show, needing only a band and an elephant——"

She stopped me impatiently. "Monsieur, he is the most accomplished and dangerous spy in Europe. If it were as easy to duplicate

Von Karl as it is to make fun of his eccentric ways and mannerisms——"

I APOLOGIZED. I did more. "If he is really so mighty a person," I submitted, "let us enlist him in finding the person who stabbed M. Legendre. Thus you, Marin, and the others will escape reprimand or worse. Even though poor Legendre dies in there, you will have attached Von Karl as your ally. The very episode will do that—his helping you to run down an enemy."

Her eloquent response and approval rather startled me at the time, though ever afterward I reflected upon it with great satisfaction.

"You are subtle, Monsieur!" she exclaimed. "What you advise is worthy of Von Karl himself."

She had clasped me by both arms. On tiptoe she offered to kiss me, not on each cheek in turn, like a general bestowing a military decoration, but on the lips. Of course I accepted this reward.

"When we can," I said thereafter, "we'd better consult Marin."

"Yes, we must at once. It dare not wait."

She went to the bedroom door and carefully swung it open halfway. The strong odor of antiseptics indicated the desperate rescue science was delicately undertaking within. She succeeded in summoning Marin from the doorway.

"It is a terrible wound," said he when he joined up. "I fear there is small chance for him, poor fellow."

When Diane anxiously introduced my proposal, he was quick in agreement.

With his ready resourcefulness he directed us: first to locate Conrad von Karl, and then to contrive it so that Diane might speak to the Spy Master alone. He said she must represent herself to Von Karl as the dying Legendre's dear friend. She must confess she had heard Legendre say he was meeting the great Von Karl, of whose amazing exhibits she had heard. So that now she was imploring the Spy Master to join her in a campaign of revenge—to lead such a campaign.

"Flatter him and admire him," Marin concluded sagely. "Of course, you appreciate all the danger to yourself in attempting to deceive Conrad von Karl—or even in associating with him privately."

DIANE shrugged. But as we made ready to start, a report came that Von Karl had returned to the launch of the gray yacht and was just going on board that dubious vessel.

"Then I too shall board it," Diane declared.

"We must try it together," I insisted.

She smiled upon me with enchanting camaraderie.

"It's only fair to warn you," Paul Marin said to me, "that the yacht is the *Achilles*, ostensibly belonging to a Levantine mongrel called Gregor Marcolos. We have had reports since he sailed from Stamboul. He picked Von Karl up at Naples. But it has generally been supposed that he had some Eastern potentate on board.

"Von Karl, you see, claims to be the son of the long-missing Archduke Karl Augustus and a royal princess of Kashmir. He publicly exploits himself in the green turban reserved for descendants of the Prophet. But he is no Moslem. If the man has a religion, it is modern psychology. He studied with Pierre Janet and Fechner and Rudolph Stern of Breslau. That is an authentic biographical item. But there

is simply no limit to his pretensions.

"Unlike Von Karl," Marin went on, "Marcolos has neither imagination, intellect, nor polish. He is an international renegade of the vilest sort, and, I think, the worst to deal with. A greedy and treacherous rascal, defiling the very gutters from which he sprang!"

"One may keep to windward or hold the nose," I said.

Diane laughed delightedly. "We shall manage!" she cried. "Your being an American should help me fool them. We shall claim we were invited to a midnight party aboard a yacht. Which yacht? How may such things be remembered? There are so many at anchor in the season. We'll pretend to be in love or intoxicated, and we'll linger till Von Karl appears. Marcolos will scarcely have us cast overboard as nuisances."

"No?" said Marin. "He would do whatever amused the brute in him. Since the *Achilles* anchored here one man has been found floating with a knife in his back, and there was rumor of another such when the yacht tarried at Genoa a week or more ago. Members of the crew? Spies? Who can say? I repeat my warning. I cannot urge you to make this mad attempt."

"But somebody must," Diane retorted. "If Marcolos controls the yacht, a messenger might not reach Von Karl. We must risk it, and at once."

I agreed.

We went unostentatiously from the hotel down to the waterfront, seeking a public launch to take us out to the *Achilles*. But where now was the vessel we proposed to investigate?

It had left its recent anchorage and was nowhere to be seen. A boatman whom Diane questioned said that the yacht was heading for Barcelona. It had steamed away not ten minutes before. When I tipped the boatman he provided us with a glass, and we were able to see the *Achilles*, not yet very far offshore. In the moonlight there could be no mistake. If Conrad von Karl was on board the yacht of Marcolos, he was being conveyed across the Mediterranean.

DIANE'S regular territory was the Riviera. She knew where we might find a swift speed-boat. Her spirit was up, and she attended to everything, joyously and with such determination and despatch that I found myself comparing her to Marin or Von Karl. If any ingredient necessary to the perfect secret service agent was absent from her bewitching person, it was certainly not one we required in the immediate present and the enterprise of overtaking the *Achilles*.

She asked me to go to the hotel, report to Marin, and change my clothes. I also carried a message to a maid whom she trusted, and who would pack a bag of hers with apparel somewhat more enduring and waterproof than evening dress.

Marin declined to authorize our new project, without actually trying to prevent it.

"If Conrad von Karl is running away, he may have been implicated in the stabbing of Legendre," said he, "and my first judgment was in error. Even so, his going is not his kind of move at all. Monaco is not France, and he is a wizard at concocting international complications. Having no valid reason for wishing Legendre slain, he could have stayed right here and dared us to prove any motive."

"In the end we shall discover his true motive."

"That," said my friend, "is not the end I foresee if you and that

wild adventuress go spy hunting in a crazy speed-boat." But when we shook hands he admitted envying me my chance. He thrust upon me, too, a very welcome automatic.

And Diane, he vowed, however reckless or enticing, might be depended upon to the last drop of her blood in any emergency. At the time I could not guess what proof of this impended.

I CARRIED the bag to her myself, after tipping her favorite maid. But she continued directing operations attired as she was.

"When I have to coax workingmen to hurry, I try to appear helpless and wealthy," she explained. "After we start, I'll change."

The boat she had hired was a freak of knife-blade structure and designed to travel like a bullet. It was painted green and silver, had belonged to a wealthy Dane, and possessed Italian motors guaranteed to develop upward of thirty-four knots.

It was Diane's plan that we seek to pass the *Achilles* during the night, and just after dawn lie directly ahead of that craft of sinister passage. We would then signal our distress—affecting to have gone off the course intended and to have exhausted our petrol.

But the two overpaid mechanics she had coaxed and driven were just finishing the installation of an extra fuel tank, cunningly hidden and bestowed in the locker astern.

There seemed nothing I could think of which she had failed to anticipate. And the astounding result was that in exactly one hour and forty minutes after we had discovered the yacht on its way—at twelve forty-seven A. M.—we were roaring out to sea in hot pursuit. Though she must undress completely to put on heavier things, Diane refused to permit any sacrifice of speed. She said she would enjoy the cool spray.

"And even the coolest spray will enjoy playing lady's maid," said I. "Or shall you need my aid?"

Laughing, she warned me not to turn round. Above the thunder of our engine I shouted a promise; and presently, muffled in a heavy cloak, she crept into the seat by my side. Together we began to remark that it was February, for on the water at this hour, surging forward so swiftly, wrapped in mist, we encountered an intense chill from which only the sunrise, yet some hours off, would release us.

BY THE greatest luck — though later we had less reason to call it that—we sighted the *Achilles* at daybreak. It now remained to work our tactical fraud: we slipped far ahead, avoided other vessels, put ourselves in the path of the fugitive, rid our forward fuel tank of its remaining supply, and then started signaling frantically for help. I flourished my coat and Diane her cloak. We soon saw the yacht slackening speed. A line was thrown to us, and I caught it and made it fast.

Ten minutes later found us on the deck of the *Achilles*, our supposedly disabled speed-boat in tow.

The mate with whom we chatted was a very decent Norwegian, who seemed not at all surprised that I, a mariner accustomed chiefly to small inland lakes, should have undertaken—as I claimed—to speed my fair companion from Nice to Toulon, and should have missed that port by more than forty nautical miles. Diane had said that she would have a male relative stationed at the great French naval base, while I must pretend to be the owner of the speed-boat, trying it out with

the foolhardy eagerness of youth and recent acquisition.

It was not any pretense, however, when we told the mate, Blomberg, that we were tired and cold. He summoned a steward, whom I took to be Javanese, and this grinning, white-uniformed Oriental escorted us to adjoining cabins.

In fifteen minutes Diane was tapping on the connecting door. She invited me in for a hurried council of war. Blomberg had said the owner of the yacht and his guests would not appear for several hours yet. They had all been up until after midnight. It was evident that one man aboard the *Achilles* disapproved almost openly of its human cargo. Diane and I were discussing this in whispers.

"I think through the morning," suggested she, "we had both better pretend to be exhausted—after our ordeal, you know. Otherwise they might offer us petrol and send us immediately on our way. If we are too overcome to leave our berths, various members of the party will visit us. That way we'll get acquainted with them, a few at a time."

"AND very well reasoned, *Ma'm'selle*," said a startling deep voice. Back of us a handsome mirrored panel of the stateroom had swung out, and Conrad von Karl stepped through with imperial grandeur.

He loomed larger than ever, though his blue sandals were heelless. He was wearing an Oriental suit of blue and white silk—or it may have been an elaborate dressing-gown and pajamas. His turban was white, its single jewel a huge sapphire. Descent from the Prophet was evidently not advertised in the early morning.

By this light his swarthy skin appeared more unbronzed and sallow than it had at the roulette table the evening before. He seemed immensely pleased with his own effective intrusion. There was a mocking gleam in the depths of his dark eyes—eyes bold, curiously dilated, blue-black, with a mockery not far removed from menace. The occasional slight twitching of the muscle above the right one I noticed anew.

"The owner of the yacht?" I queried, rising.

"The master of the yacht," said he, allowing us to interpret it as we chose. "Pardon my informal manner of greeting you——" he began, in French.

"I am an American," I interrupted him, recalling my pose, "and understand only English."

"It is gratifying to meet an American who speaks it," he replied satirically.

I presented him to Diane, and his courtly bow would have won the interest of a queen.

"Have you breakfasted?" he inquired.

"We told your steward, in half an hour," said she.

Von Karl seated himself. He offered us cigarettes from a platinum case which he took from his blue silk sash. He smiled in the friendliest fashion, a smile of youth, warm and disarming. But he said abruptly: "Tell me your story."

It was a command and clearly implied that he was awaiting some improbable narrative.

We jointly set forth the labored fiction of our mishap. The distorted course from Nice to Toulon——

"And now tell me of your more important errand aboard this vessel," he said with crushing blandness.

Diane proved a match for the man, at least verbally.

With no apology, with such tran-

sition as a fleeting smile described, she went into the narrative Paul Marin had made ready for us. Her dear friend, M. Legendre, having been stabbed—left dying perhaps—

"I have had a wireless message," said Conrad von Karl. "Legendre is dead."

With histrionic genius, Diane commenced to sob.

Together Von Karl and I comforted her.

"She told me that you are a great man, Herr von Karl," said I. "I placed my boat at her disposal—we are old friends, you see. She wished to find you and beg you to join us in an effort to avenge this good man's murder."

"Assassination," he corrected me.

Very tenderly he took Diane's small hand and patted it, saying: "Do not distress yourself, dear *Ma'm'selle*."

"But I—I loved him," she sobbed—I thought almost overdoing it. And Von Karl agreed.

HE ROSE abruptly. "If we are to become allies in this," said he, "let us no more pretend, please. You are of the French secret service," he told her. "And you?" he frowned at me imposingly.

"Merely a friend, as I said—with a swift boat handy," I insisted.

"Very well." He lowered his voice and stepped between us stealthily. This man of deadly disrepute, his life afflicted by a hundred plots, was yet playing the conspirator for us with an amateur's relish.

Diane ceased crying.

"You will join us?" she exclaimed.

Von Karl laughed and indulged himself in a pretentious insolence.

"Dear young lady," said he, "you are most clever. I admire you—indeed, yes. I would employ you gladly, and enrich you beyond even feminine dreams if you served me well. But I shall not require assistance from either of you in this little reckoning.

"Did you wonder why I fled from Monte Carlo?" he questioned. "A guilty, damning attitude—unworthy of Conrad von Karl. I went with the yacht in order to remain with the slayer of M. Legendre."

"He is on board?" we exclaimed.

"Where else? Legendre, a bureaucrat, was discretion personified. On this yacht are the only ones who could even guess I was meeting a representative of the French Foreign Office. On this yacht are those who know how to profit by opposing the Quai d'Orsay. You have come to ask my aid, eh?" he concluded. "Why, really, you have come to witness the trial and punishment of Legendre's assassins."

"Then there were several in the plot?"

"I prefer to have it so," said he.

But when we asked for particulars he grew evasive.

"An explanation almost in full will be acted out before your very eyes," he announced.

"To-day?"

"To-day," he said. "Meanwhile, wait patiently. You must appear to be ill from your mishap and night-long exposure. I advise that you remain in your berths and avoid conversation until I need you as—as my audience."

HE KEPT us waiting until after one o'clock. But before noon we had two visitors. First came the blonde Englishwoman, Mrs. Shelton, who had stood beside Von Karl while he won at roulette, and who wished chiefly to determine whether Diane was young and beautiful—and did. And then she stopped to see me for reasons no doubt associated with her discovery. She was

playing the hostess on board rather anxiously, and I judged that either Marcolos or Von Karl tolerated her assumption and perhaps made use of it, but gave her no satisfactory sanction. She said that they were just a jolly party, and that we must hurry to recover and join in the fun.

The alleged host, Gregor Marcolos, was our other caller. He, too, came to me after visiting Diane. He forgot that I had been able to hear her politely ordering his departure. His affability was ponderous, thick with suspicion, but oily and sickening. A great rogue, weighing close to three hundred, I guessed.

He not only answered Marin's description, but supplied an odor for it also. He smelled vilely of fish, having recently had breakfast. A grilled shark would appropriately have filled him. His eyes were the smallest ever seen in a face so fleshy and swollen with evil living. His white flannels were grotesquely soiled, and to prove his gentility he flourished a soiled silk handkerchief as large as a towel.

VON KARL, for all that I doubted him, was a welcome change of company.

"The time has come!" said he, and led me in to Diane, already alert. Then both of us followed him through the swinging, mirrored panel, along a narrow passage and by way of a second panel into his own stateroom, which, considering his luxurious taste in dress, seemed strangely stripped and bare.

He pointed to a tray with sandwiches and a bottle of champagne.

"Your luncheon," said he. "Will it suffice, do you think? Youth is always famished. Can you eat rapidly?"

We endeavored to please him.

"Of course," he turned to me, "your speed-boat has extra fuel hidden on board? You see, your arrival, my friends, facilitates this little matter of retribution. I had even intended waiting till dinner. But the wind is coming up. Some may be omitting dinner. And I prefer to have them all together."

"Aren't we nearing Barcelona?" I asked.

"We are actually somewhat nearer Corsica," he astonished us by answering. "The only intelligent members of the crew are my own men," he explained. "We had to weed some out, and now we seem to be a bit short-handed." I recalled Marin's statement about the floating victims.

"I am ready," announced Diane, finishing a glass of wine.

Von Karl moved to the door impatiently, so I abandoned my intent upon another sandwich.

"I suggest," he said to her, "that you search in every stateroom—search thoroughly. Legendre had a code memorandum on him. It was probably stolen when he fell. If you found it, that would help you in the service of your country, eh?" He smiled engagingly.

"It should prove who did the stabbing, too," I said.

His glance commiserated my stupidity. "I have no longer a passion for proofs," he declared. "But come! I mean to place you as unseen witnesses."

He guided us quickly to a point that I guessed to be near the dining salon. There came to us the sound of high-pitched, witless laughter and the normal hum and stir of a considerable party at luncheon. Von Karl paused, listening.

"They are all in there," said he. Then to Diane: "You may begin searching without fear of encountering any one. Never doubt I shall be keeping them occupied." A cruel

note of triumph had sprung from this statement. I watched Diane go with the utmost misgiving. "She will be safe," he informed me, reading my thought. "A lovely girl, perfect in this work, but deserving of better."

He suddenly had opened a narrow passage where none had appeared to be. I hesitated and peered in.

"Go in three paces, and you'll find two steps, and when you are raised that much you will achieve a perfect view. This panel does not lock," he assured me. "You will hear every word I speak, my friend, and will know when the moment has come to go on deck."

"And Diane?" I exclaimed.

"She has full instructions," said he.

I FOLLOWED mine to the letter, and, as he had promised, found that I could stand on the upper step and perceive all that might happen in the yacht's dining salon.

Von Karl himself had not yet entered when I first looked through the small, carved grating. I saw Mrs. Shelton officiously presiding, with the huge, unwholesome Marcolos seated at the other end of the long table. Between them there were nine guests, four women and five men, and one vacant place on the Shelton right—Von Karl's.

The four women I studied briefly: flashy types, Latin, well dressed but touching the extremes of fashion. The men, if not the gluttonous Levantine's size, were surely his kind—brazen or furtive, sleek, and each arrayed according to a vulgar fancy. Truly a den of worse than thieves!

Conrad von Karl, who still wore the Oriental suit, with a green turban, now flashing no emerald or other jewel, entered, apologized for his lateness, yet did not go to his place.

"The pretty girl rescued romantically this morning?" somebody smirked. "Who would not be detained?"

"Silence!" he commanded in a formidable voice.

I saw the Javanese steward quietly withdrawing.

"What do you——" Marcolos started to bluster.

Von Karl checked him with a glance and began to talk to them, evenly and terribly, with brutal and detailed descriptions of each, the muscle twitching above his right eye, the blue-dyed nails of one restless hand gleaming like demoniac talons.

"I had thought there was one on the yacht that I might trust," he said, looking at Mrs. Shelton. "Last night that one led me away for an hour's play in the Casino, and in that hour a man whose existence importantly concerned me was mortally stabbed. I have therefore condemned you all."

ONE of the women began whimpering. But Marcolos raged.

"You impudent clown—on my own yacht——"

"My agent sold it to you, king of grease," Von Karl jeered. "I borrowed it from a Turk, who is rich and will lose it cheerfully to win my permanent esteem."

"Lose it?"

Livid and ashen faces which had been rouged or sinister a moment ago swam before my gaze, circling that spotless cloth. And suddenly not so spotless! A cocktail glass had been tipped over, but none heeded the spreading stain.

"Yes, lose it," said Von Karl in cool derision. "My unhappy companions, this is going to be the most peculiar sea tragedy of the Riviera season!"

He turned sharply to Marcolos.

"You paid a large sum for the yacht. I know, for I netted a profit. And will Lloyds detect your legitimate heirs and compensate them? You invited me on this cruise to overthrow me. You loaded up with these poisonous vermin—your fools and dupes, but my enemies every one. You have much cash in the safe, I believe. You will accomplish the impossible, and take your loot even to your grave.

"After all," he told them, "this is mercy tempered with justice. You are spies, renegades, professional traitors. There is a great war coming. I could never use any of you. And you all are so stupid, you would be caught and executed, one by one. But I—I am going to send you down to hell in a body. None there will care to associate with you, and to the unphilosophical, ostracism is worse than hell. By my merciful stratagem you will be company for each other there in even hellish loneliness."

I saw several rise as if they meant to rush him.

"So?" He saw them, too, and whipped out a heavy revolver. As he held them at bay, he commenced to remove his bright turban. Underneath he had already a rubber swimming cap. Methodically, having but one hand free, he fastened a strap under his swarthy chin.

"Ladies must not leave, but they may bow their heads," he chuckled, and began to shed his garments.

Again he was prepared with a green silk swimming suit, which set off his muscular figure.

He wore a broad belt of green suède, which held a holster and extra cartridges, and strapped to it were a leather-covered flask and a green morocco pouch.

"I am ready," he observed, chest expanding.

The scene was hideous. He could not keep them quiet. Raving they were, and imploring him, cursing and foaming abominably. A woman shrieked and fainted. A man blindly charged to meet his doom—and did.

Von Karl shot him. And then, time pressing, he bent in a flash and recovered his discarded turban. A glass tube it seemed to me that his fingers were deftly extracting from it. But he said: "Gas grenade!"

When they snarled and pleaded, he laughed with cruel self-indulgence. "This will not asphyxiate you," he announced. "Another example of my special mercy. You will each of you revive—soon after striking the cold water."

Bull-like, bellowing, Marcolos surged upon his radiant tormentor.

"Shooting is too good for you," said Von Karl. Lightly he dodged the fat Levantine, and then hurled the grenade.

I had to turn away. But not before I had seen the Spy Master, proud of his grace and form, bound to the salon door and jerk it open. I heard it slam immediately.

They were coughing horribly in that chamber of torture as I sprang to the panel Von Karl had said did not lock. I hurled myself against it, and it held.

I heard a muffled explosion, and the yacht quivered in rending agony. That roar and impact could mean only one thing. The work of Conrad von Karl was complete. He had dared to blow up the very deck beneath his feet, taking his chance on some miraculous personal escape. Or had he arranged that also? The speed-boat—why not? And what of Diane?

Frantically I began hammering upon the panel. And suddenly, when I was aching from the effort of it

and the maddening frustration, and was sickening, too, for the gas had penetrated to my passageway, the barrier that I assailed gave and let me go free.

Everything was aslant, with all loose articles sliding adrift and crazily distorted. Unfamiliar with the craft at best, I now grappled with a marine puzzle verging upon nightmare. But finally, meeting no other survivor, I staggered upon deck.

THE poor wounded *Achilles* was settling fast at the bow. Blomberg, the Javanese and three other men were already clearing a lifeboat. Diane I discovered at a distance, by the stern, where she stood calmly undressing. In lieu of lingerie, she wore a suitable swimming garment of blue. She had even anticipated last night an aquatic crisis to our adventuring.

Shots attracted my attention. Von Karl was firing into another lifeboat to make it unseaworthy.

Diane looked back, saw me, and waved. Slender and shapely, like a polished arrow in the sun, she dived from the rail of the yacht. First to reach the speed-boat, she would sever the tow-line before the sinking vessel dragged down our chief hope of escape. She meant me to follow her.

Well, let this monster drown with his stifled victims! But now Von Karl noticed me and hailed me with what I thought to be a slight surprise. He was already perching magnificently upon the rail when I came up with him.

"Perfection of planning!" he boasted. "In secret I sent all my own valuables ashore yesterday. I had my explosive wired to the lighting circuit, and with a safety cut-out in my stateroom. At the convenient moment I needed only to press a buttom to send her to the bottom."

"There won't be room enough for the two of us in that boat of mine," I told him truculently.

"Indeed?" He paused, silken, statuesque, and appraised me with a mirthless eye. "Then—my regrets!" he said with a faint sneer. "You elect to swim alone to Corsica. However, you leave me your enchanting companion!"

I struck at him, and he kicked me. It hurt my shoulder slightly, but threw his majestic bulk off balance. For a precarious moment Von Karl was comic — cursing and clutching at nothing substantial. Then he toppled backward and plunged a-sprawl into the sea.

DIANE, a superb swimmer, had gained the speed-boat and clambered into it. With splendid *elan* she cut loose the tow, started the engine, and ran in close to the foundering yacht. I slipped off my shoes and jumped, and she picked me up, maneuvering with expert seamanship.

"And there is Conrad von Karl!" she called out.

I could see him, struggling manfully to swim clear of the area of suction around the rapidly vanishing *Achilles*.

"Let him try it all the way to Corsica," said I.

But Paul Marin, she reminded me, greatly desired the Spy Master's safe return to France. With Legendre dead——

Regretfully I capitulated. Marin's automatic I had left hidden in the stern locker with our tank of extra fuel. So it was with this that I could greet a weaponless Von Karl, directly after Diane and I had dragged him on board.

Nevertheless, when we both

agreed that we must search about, to see if there were others we might rescue, he objected. Diane and my gun united to silence him.

"There—oh, see there!" the girl exclaimed.

It was the Shelton woman—all but done for and hardly conscious, her blonde hair streaming and her clothes a scant ruin as Von Karl, at my command, roughly hauled her into the speed-boat. His disgust was profound and repulsive.

"Here! Give her some of this cognac," urged Diane, producing a bottle from the magical locker astern.

Von Karl took it and first generously helped himself. "Otard—and welcome!" he commented. "I remembered to bring stimulant. But in diving I dislodged it from my belt. A flask of my best Napoleon brandy—1836."

Diane, in disgust, took the bottle from him and squeezed past to attend to Mrs. Shelton herself.

"I recommend that you keep on to Corsica," said Von Karl. "There is one little matter there I wish to attend to promptly. Calvi is east nor'east——"

"We are going to Nice," I informed him sharply.

"Well, there is another matter there requiring my early attention," said he with immense composure as I put the speed-boat on a course due north.

Cold Poison

By ALFRED F. HORNER

IN "Villikens and His Dinah," an English comic song of nearly a century ago, the heroine is made to commit suicide by means of "a cup of cold pizen." Ancient legend has it that something of the same sort was used to dispose of Alexander the Great, King of Macedon, one of the world's greatest military geniuses, who died in 323 B. C. The commonest story is that he was poisoned with water brought from the River Styx.

Now, in ancient mythology, the Styx was a river of Hades, flowing seven times around the lower world. The gods swore many of their oaths by it, pouring out a cup of the water as they did so.

Strangely enough, a river in Arcadia, central Greece, also named Styx, was identified by the ancients with this river of Hades. Pausanias describes this dreadful stream as "falling from a precipice, the highest he had ever beheld, and dashing itself upon a lofty rock, through which it passed and then fell into the Crathis River."

Because of its name, superstitious feelings of dread were attached to it, and even until very recent times the Greek peasants thought its water was poisonous.

The poison of the Styx was so virulent (or, as another version had it, so cold) that no vessel of glass, stone, metal or other material could contain it for a moment without breaking; the only substance that could withstand it was the hoof of an ass or horse.

In early days stories were often told of a poison so strong that it would break glass upon touching it. Alexander Ross, a seventeenth century writer, says, "Such is the venom of some spiders that they will crack a Venice glass, as I have seen; and Scaliger doth witness the same."

The poison intended for Alexander the Great was therefore carried from Greece to Babylon, where he died, in a cup made out of a donkey's hoof.

She smuggled the child into the house.

Famous Unsolved Mysteries

By ALVIN F. HARLOW

Real life presents many mysteries even more fantastic than those that fiction has to offer. Beginning with this issue MYSTERY STORIES presents to its readers the first of a series of enthralling tales, the solutions of which have never been found. Alvin F. Harlow, who has gathered the facts together from old records, has put them into a form which is bound to interest you. No solutions of the mysteries have been attempted. All known facts regarding the happenings are presented, and we leave it to you to draw your own conclusions.

The Affair at 31 Bond Street

SEVENTY years ago New York City was profoundly stirred by the mysterious murder of Dr. Harvey Burdell, a well-to-do dentist. So bizarre, so sordid, were the scene, the circumstances, and the curious medley of characters involved in the crime, so remarkable were the contradictions in fact and evidence, that the recital of it might well be a piece of fiction by Balzac or Dickens.

Go down into the textile district on Broadway and turn east into Bond Street. You will find it a busy canyon of commerce, shut in by the towering walls of wholesale houses and loft buildings. But seventy years ago it was a residence street, built up solidly with brick and brownstone fronts, much as are some of the uptown cross

streets to-day. A little seedy in places was Bond Street then, here and there perhaps not all that it should be; some good folk among its residents, and some not so good. In one category or another was the houseful of folk to whom we shall presently be introduced.

ON FRIDAY night, January 29, 1857, at about a quarter before eleven o'clock, a man named Ross was walking along Bond Street. In front of him, at a distance—as he first stated to reporters—of about one hundred and fifty feet (he changed this distance later, at the inquest, to twenty-five feet) he saw a tall, heavily built man walking with a shawl around his shoulders such as men often wore then. The man went up the steps of Number 31, opened the door with a latch-key, and went inside.

"When I got a house and a half or two houses farther on," said Ross, "I heard a cry of 'Murd—' Short, like that. The word wasn't finished."

At the same time a man named Strangman was walking on the opposite side of the street. "I heard a sharp, stifled cry," said he. "The cry was loud and like that of a person in agony. It was a sort of shrill cry. I looked up and down Bond Street at the time, and saw no person in it."

A Mr. Brooks, who lived at Number 36, almost directly opposite, also heard the sound. Said he: "The first syllable *mur* was distinct, but the *der* was prolonged and guttural. I was going to bed. I instantly sprang on a chest of drawers, and through the Venetian blinds, which were shut, I could distinctly see the house (No. 31). . . . The night being very still, I thought I heard a noise as of a shuffling on a floor. . . . I looked up the street in order to see if garroters were around. . . . I saw nothing further."

A fourth man, named Farrell, was in Bond Street between ten and eleven o'clock. Apparently finding some object in his shoe, he sat down on the step of Number 31 to remove it. While he was doing this he saw two men approaching him along the sidewalk. The first one turned up the steps alongside him and entered the door; the second, undoubtedly Ross, passed by and went on down the street.

"In a half-minute or so after the man went into the house," testified Farrell, "I heard a cry of 'Murder'! I said to myself: 'There's a muss in that house.'" (But he thought it nothing more serious than a drunken brawl.) "In probably a minute," he went on in his rambling statement, "I heard the retreating step of the man who had gone in. When the noise was over I heard a door open. After the cry something solid, like a barrel, had been turned down. In half a minute a man came to the door and opened it. I looked up and he said: 'What are you doing there?' The man was in his shirt sleeves. I thought he had been sent by the man who first went in, to turn me off the step, so I took my shoe in my hand to three or four doors off. . . . The man who went into the house had a shawl on. The sound I heard was like that of some one choking."

THESE four statements ring up the curtain on the last act of a strange and complicated mystery. The four men mentioned were all dug up by bustling newspaper reporters on the following morning, when the tragedy was discovered. The police do not seem to have discovered much of importance. The New York Police Department and, in

fact, detective work in general in America were far less clever then than now.

The coroner made a vast clamor with his investigation—the *Tribune* called him Mr. Coroner Dogberry—but he was a fussy, obstinate individual who was inclined to overlook important evidence and magnify the trivial. With a mystery as involved as this, it is no wonder that he did not completely solve it.

Everywhere in the testimony there were discrepancies, contradictions, and mere hearsay evidence. The four outside witnesses, for example, were at odds. Ross, after seeing the shawled man enter the house, heard only the first syllable of "murder"—nothing more. Brooks heard the whole word and other sounds, but saw nothing. Strangman merely heard a cry and saw no one in the street. Meanwhile, Farrell was seated—unseen by the other three—on the steps of Number 31; the shawled man passed him to go up the steps, and a minute or two later the door was opened and Farrell was asked what he was doing there and was ordered away, as he testified later. None of the first three men noticed all this.

Another strange feature of the matter to us to-day is that four persons should have heard a cry of murder or a scream of agony, and should not have notified the police or done anything else. Evidently they were the sort that say, "It's none of my business," and hasten in the other direction when trouble arises.

NOW let us look inside the house. The chief personage residing at Number 31 was Dr. Harvey Burdell, a dentist. He was about forty-six years old, tall, inclined to be heavy in build, full-blooded, and with a reputation as rather a loose liver. Another dentist who knew him said he was a mercenary, selfish man of strong passions. He was easily excited and quarrelsome, but did not like getting into a fight. In other words, he was something of a bluffer—there must have been a little streak of timidity in him. He quarreled with every one with whom he did business, quarreled with his partners, quarreled with his kinspeople and had lawsuits with most of them.

Burdell was the owner of the house Number 31. He lived in one room of it and rented out the rest. His room, which was at the rear of the first floor, he used as his dental office. He also slept there on a sofa, eating his meals in cheap restaurants here and there. He had an Irish servant girl—a remarkable one, if newspaper reports were true—whom the *Tribune* declared he treated more like a dog than a human being. He paid her a miserably small salary and gave her no bed nor anything else to sleep on. Besides English, she was said to be able to speak French, German and Spanish; and she had a great fondness for studying languages in general. She slept sitting on a stool in the basement kitchen below the hall door, so that if any one rang the bell at night, she could answer it; and if any one entered the door at night, she would hear them and see who they were. But on the night of January 29th she seems to have slept too soundly to hear any noise. Strangely enough, she did not figure in the inquest and did not appear in the crime—another of the mysteries of this peculiar case.

IT MUST be remembered that this house was of the type of which many are still left on New York's cross-streets. The basement or

kitchen floor was a step or two below the street level, the first or living floor nearly a story's height above it, reached by a flight of steps from the sidewalk.

After the tragedy some of the neighbors declared they had always said that some of the tenants in the house were, as Mr. Dooley used to put it, "no better than they should be." These tenants were, briefly, a Mrs. Cunningham, a handsome widow with two daughters; a Mr. John L. Eckel, a merchant supposed to be a suitor of Mrs. Cunningham's; a youth of eighteen named Snodgrass, who was very attentive to Mrs. Cunningham's two daughters, Augusta and Helen; a politician known as Honorable Daniel Ulman, and Hannah Coulen, Mrs. Cunningham's cook.

The third or attic floor of the house had two rooms, in one of which Hannah Coulen slept, while the other was occupied by Snodgrass. On the second floor were three large rooms. Mrs. Cunningham and her daughters occupied one, Eckel another, and Ulman the third. As already mentioned, Burdell lived in a large room at the rear of the first floor. The front room on this floor seems to have been vacant at the time of the murder.

AT ABOUT eight o'clock on Saturday morning John Burchell, an errand boy employed by Doctor Burdell, went from his home in the neighborhood to Number 31 to carry coal and start the fires. When he left a scuttle of coal at Doctor Burdell's door he noticed that the door was closed, but that the key was in the keyhole on the outside, a thing which he had never noticed before. He went on about his duties. Mrs. Cunningham and her daughters had breakfasted, Eckel had gone out early to keep a business engagement, and Ulman, who had come in late the night before, had not arisen.

After starting fires in two or three of the rooms, the boy went to Doctor Burdell's rooms to get instructions for his day's work. He knocked, but there was no answer. He opened the door, and as he did so noticed smears which proved to be blood on the wall and on a cupboard door. A step or two farther and he saw his employer lying face downward on the floor, with a great pool of blood, now nearly dried, on the carpet around his head and shoulders.

Greatly terrified, the boy ran into the hall, where he met Hannah, the cook, and the two ran up and told Mrs. Cunningham. She immediately began to weep and grow hysterical. At Snodgrass's direction, the boy ran out on the street and soon came back with a policeman and a doctor.

The physician, making a careful examination, found signs of strangulation, also no less than fifteen stab-wounds, mostly about the neck and chest, any one of them deep enough to penetrate the heart. He said that the wounds had been made with a knife or dagger whose blade was fully eight inches in length and about three-quarters of an inch wide.

The doctor's pockets were not rifled and there were no signs of robbery in the room; nor was there any evidence that the house had been broken into. Although the doctor had quarreled with a number of persons, there could be found at first no one who was thought to have a sufficient grudge against him to desire his death. The conclusion of the coroner and the police, therefore, was that the murderer was some one inside the house. With this idea in mind the coroner in-

vestigated the character and actions of the various tenants as thoroughly as he was capable of doing.

ON THE night of the murder, it was testified, Mrs. Cunningham sent her servants to bed about ten o'clock, and she herself retired a short time later, as did Eckel and Snodgrass. Ulman did not come home until twelve-thirty. He noticed nothing unusual when he came in. According to Ross, Brooks, and Strangman, the murdered man cried out at about a quarter to eleven; Farrell could only say it was between ten and eleven. This testimony was corroborated by the fact that the body was cold and rigid when discovered next morning, and the blood on the clothes and carpet pretty well dried. That it could be possible for three men on the street and one man across the street to hear the cry, and two of them to hear other sounds, and yet not a soul inside the house to hear anything, looked a bit queer, to say the least of it. And how may we explain the fact that nobody in adjoining houses heard any of the sounds, nor did those in houses fronting toward the opposite side of the block, though their rear windows were just across some narrow back yards from the windows of the room in which the murder was committed? It seems that they should have heard the victim's dying cry much more readily than Brooks, to whom the sound came through the full length of the house and across the street.

The investigation had not proceeded far when some new and startling testimony was brought forth. Mrs. Cunningham asserted that three months before Doctor Burdell's death—specifically, on the evening of October 28th—she had been quietly married to Burdell by a Reverend Mr. Marvine, at the latter's residence, her eldest daughter and the clergyman's maidservant being the only witnesses. Mr. Marvine, when called before the coroner, identified Mrs. Cunningham as the lady for whom he had performed a ceremony about that time, but when shown the corpse of Doctor Burdell, he failed to identify it as that of the bride-groom. His memory was strengthened as to the event by the fact that when the groom called at his house on the day following the ceremony to get a marriage certificate and the minister saw him in broad daylight, he was attracted by the peculiar appearance of the man's whiskers, and remarked to some one in his family that they looked as if they were false. His servant also failed to identify the body as that of the groom. It must be remembered, however, that three months had passed, that several couples had been married at the parsonage during that time, and that the maid's memory might have been none of the best.

THE further the case was probed, the more puzzling it became. Mrs. Cunningham's servant and the maid who had preceded her testified that for some time before the alleged marriage Doctor Burdell took his meals with Mrs. Cunningham and "acted as if he was her husband," but that from about the date of the secret wedding he not only discontinued these practices, but absolutely refused to eat any food or beverages which she sent him from her table; he did not occupy the same sleeping apartment and did not appear to regard her as his wife. One of the servants went further, and accused Mrs. Cunningham of intimacy with Eckel.

This man Eckel was another

strange character. Evidence as to his past showed that he had formerly been a butcher but had now an extensive business in hides and tallow, having three stores in different parts of the city. He was almost completely bald, and had a peculiar fancy for wearing wigs of different colors and character—some curly, some straight, some long, some short—which entirely changed his appearance. He would not admit that there was any reason for this practice save just a whim for variety. But coupled with Mr. Marvine's notion that the man whom he had joined in marriage to Mrs. Cunningham was wearing false whiskers, the matter seemed to have a particular significance. Evidence was strong that Eckel was on intimate terms with Mrs. Cunningham, but the keenest questioning by the coroner failed to draw from him any admission which would connect him with the murder of Doctor Burdell. And yet, if Farrell's evidence, to be mentioned later, was trustworthy, there was an ugly-looking point against him.

FROM the door of the room in which Burdell was murdered, through the hall to the front door, the police found an occasional drop of blood on the floor. The inside knob of the door was slightly smeared with blood, and there was a mark of it on the edge of the door, about four feet from the floor. There was no blood on the outside knob—from which fact the authorities deduced that the murderer had not left the house, else he would have left blood on the outside knob in pulling the door shut after him. Taking finger-prints as evidence was as yet unheard-of in those days, else the matter might have been settled more readily—perhaps!

Farrell said the man who came to the door after he heard the cry held the door partly open with his right hand on the inner knob and his left on the edge of the door—a remarkable confirmation of the blood stains—and, seeing Farrell on the step, ordered him away angrily. Farrell was severely cross-examined, but his story was not shaken. And yet doubt was thrown on his testimony by that of the other outside witnesses.

Ross testified at the coroner's hearing that he was perhaps twenty-five feet behind the man now identified as Doctor Burdell when the latter turned up the steps; that when he passed the steps he saw no one sitting there; that when he was about forty feet past the steps, he heard the cry; that he turned and looked back and again saw no man sitting on the steps. Therefore, while Ross was walking sixty-five feet, Burdell had entered the house and had been attacked.

But it must be remembered that Burdell had to climb the steps, unlock the street door, go in and lock it behind him, walk the length of the hall, unlock his own room door and go in; and then it appeared that he had removed his overshoes, laid aside his hat and shawl, and sat down at his desk before he was attacked. All this could not have happened during the minute that a vigorous man like Ross was walking sixty-five feet. The only conclusion is that he was mistaken in the distance.

STRANGMAN, on the opposite side of the street, was several houses past Number 31 when he heard the cry. He looked back and saw no one. He didn't look at any house in particular, and admitted that Farrell might have been sitting on the steps, unnoticed by him. It must be remembered that the gas-

lights at the street corners in those days were not as bright as the electric street lights of to-day. Thus it appears that Ross did not see either Farrell nor Strangman, Strangman saw neither Ross nor Farrell, and Brooks saw none of the other three. Furthermore, neither Ross, Strangman, nor Brooks saw the man open the door of Number 31, nor heard him order Farrell away! Farrell, when confronted with the male tenants of Number 31, pointed out Eckel and said he believed him to be the man who had opened the door. In Eckel's defense it was of course argued that the light in the street was very dim, and that there was only a dim light in the hall behind him, so that Farrell might have been mistaken.

It might be thought that these four men in claiming to have heard Doctor Burdell's death cry were merely seeking notoriety had it not been that none of them knew Burdell, yet two of them described his general appearance accurately, and that all four of them agreed almost perfectly as to the time of the sounds in Number 31. These four men were all accosted by reporters on Saturday morning; none of them knew the others, nor knew what the others had told the reporters.

MEANWHILE, greater complications developed as other witnesses were found who knew Doctor Burdell. It appeared that he was not only immoral, quarrelsome and mean, but that he had a pretty loose tongue. He died possessed of about a hundred thousand dollars, earned from his dental practice and shrewd investments. He had always passed as a bachelor; said he was not married and never intended to be—and to some he had added: "Least of all to Mrs. Cunningham." He declared that she was trying to entrap him into a marriage. He told at least one witness that he was in fear of her and of other people in the house, and that she was capable of doing anything to injure him. He made these assertions even on the day of his death, and begged his late partner, Doctor Blaisdell, to come and live in the house with him for that reason. He also said that he had made his will, and named the kinsmen who would benefit by it and the amounts he had left them; but he took pains to add that he had not remembered Mrs. Cunningham in the will. This document was never found, and no one could surmise what had become of it.

It also developed that Burdell had concluded an agreement to lease Number 31 to a man named Stansbury. He had written the lease on the day of his death, intending to meet Stansbury and sign it next day. He expressed to some of his friends his relief at the thought of getting rid of the house and Mrs. Cunningham. He declared that she watched him, dogged his footsteps, listened at doors, peeped through keyholes, entered his room with false keys, stole the key of his fireproof safe and took therefrom a note of her own for six hundred dollars which had come into the doctor's possession through some transaction which was only vaguely explained.

EVEN husbands and wives have been known to indulge in such bushwhacking as this; but more strange things were brought out in connection with the secret marriage between Mrs. Cunningham and Burdell, or Eckel or some one else impersonating Burdell. It was revealed that during the previous September the woman had brought suit against Doctor Burdell, alleging in her complaint that at one time he had attacked her. On Oc-

tober 22d she dropped this suit. On October 28th the secret marriage took place. To add to the contradictions, Mrs. Cunningham's attorney, when called by the coroner, admitted that several weeks after October 28th she had told him that she intended reopening the breach-of-promise suit against Burdell!

There was plenty of evidence that there had been quarrels between Burdell and the Cunningham woman, and that he had accused her of breaking into his safe. On one occasion he had even called in two policemen to arrest her, but they had dissuaded and pacified him. One of the officers testified that she used violent language toward the doctor, and said that "she would have his heart's blood." One of her woman servants told at the inquest of brawls between Burdell, Mrs. Cunningham, and her eldest daughter, Augusta. The maid said that Burdell had told her that on one occasion Augusta attacked him and pulled out some of his hair.

The general public opinion of the day was that Mrs. Cunningham had established herself in Burdell's house, hoping to inveigle or entrap him into marriage. Failing in this, she induced her paramour, Eckel, to impersonate Burdell in a sham marriage with a view to claiming her dower share of his fortune—between thirty and forty thousand dollars—if he should die, as the chances were that he might. Those who accused her believed that the threatened leasing of the house, which might throw her and her daughters out of a home, probably hastened the catastrophe.

The coroner (and others) in trying to visualize the crime fancied that Eckel and perhaps Mrs. Cunningham were hidden somewhere in Doctor Burdell's room when he came home that night and that, after he sat down at his desk, they—or at least Eckel—sprang out upon him and did him to death. Three or four neighbors on Bond Street and the street in the rear testified that they were awakened and made uneasy by a strong odor of burning wool between one-thirty and two o'clock on Saturday morning—which, so it was supposed, meant that the murderers were burning their blood-stained clothing. The knife with which the killing was done was never found.

BUT there were others who argued: "Who can say that it was not Snodgrass who did the deed, or the quiet, rather mysterious Ulman, who claimed that he did not come home until twelve-thirty that night? Doctor Burdell was known to be an unjust and quarrelsome man; might he not have had trouble with one of these, or even with some one outside the house, who managed to steal in and hide that evening, with the idea of being avenged on him?

"And there was the Irish servant girl. If all reports were true, she had ample cause to hate him—and perhaps more cause than the public was aware of. Might not she have engineered the crime—perhaps have hidden a kinsman or a lover of hers in the doctor's room that night, armed with the deadly knife? It might even be true that others in the house knew of the murder but hated the doctor so that they were willing to conceal their knowledge of his death."

If some one inside the house killed him, it is rather remarkable that the murderer took no pains to make the killing appear as if done for robbery's sake, or to do anything whatsoever calculated to turn suspicion away from the tenants. And yet none of the tenants could be convicted of the crime.

It is true that the coroner's jury

declared its belief that Eckel and Mrs. Cunningham were principals; that Snodgrass either joined in the act or was an accessory before the fact; and that Mrs. Cunningham's daughters, Augusta and Helen, also had guilty knowledge of the crime. But before Snodgrass and Eckel could be brought to trial, the case against them was dropped for lack of evidence. Mrs. Cunningham was put in the prisoner's dock on May 6th, 1857; but after a three days' trial, during which the prosecutor could adduce little against her save hearsay evidence, and even that having little direct bearing on the case, the jury, after deliberating an hour and a half, declared her not guilty.

SHE appeared not in the least perturbed by her narrow escape from the gallows, but at once set about asserting her rights as Doctor Burdell's widow. It might have been possible for one as nervy and determined as herself to succeed in establishing her claim to the dower portion—one-third of the estate. But she was not satisfied with that: she wanted it all. So she made arrangements to produce an heir who was to be the son of Doctor Burdell.

In order to do this, she bribed a physician, one Doctor Ahl, whom she believed to be sufficiently crooked to help her carry out her scheme. He was to certify that he had been present at the birth of the child. But Ahl deceived her, and reported her scheme to the authorities. A detective followed her as she went, disguised as a nun, one afternoon to a house in the slums, where she had bought an unwanted baby. The infant was delivered to her, and in a closed carriage she returned to 31 Bond Street, where she was still living, reaching it after dark and smuggling the child into the house under a wrap of some sort. Next day the birth of the child to her was announced with great rejoicings, her daughters and Eckel being among the witnesses and heralds of the event. Not until then did the police show their hand. Mrs. Cunningham was arrested, but as her plot had been exposed and she had lost her chance to get any of the Burdell money, they considered that she had been sufficiently punished for her roguery, and set her free again.

AND here is where the story of the case turns from tragedy to comedy. Mrs. Cunningham accepted an offer from P. T. Barnum to exhibit herself and the baby in his Museum at the corner of Broadway and Ann Street and there for several weeks she and the infant posed before thousands of curious people—for nearly everybody in New York and vicinity wanted to see one who had been a central figure in so celebrated a case.

If Mrs. Cunningham was really guilty of assisting in the doctor's death or of killing him herself, she must take rank with the boldest and most cold-blooded murderesses in history. But no one will ever know whose hands closed upon Doctor Burdell's throat at a quarter before eleven on that January night in the rear room of 31 Bond Street.

He saw Lefebvre fling up his arm.

The Man Who Looked Back

By LESLIE McFARLANE

When Morel had plenty of time to think about it he was able to justify every criminal act of his. But there came a time when he reflected a moment too late—and that moment was fatal.

ALTHOUGH it was four o'clock in the morning and bitterly cold, there was a crowd in the narrow street beneath the high stone walls of the jail. The bare branches of the trees creaked in the wind, and little whorls of snow came sifting out of the darkness beyond the radius of the arc light. The people of the crowd whispered to one another, shivered with the cold, shuffled about in the shadows or stood rigid and silent, collars up, hands deep in pockets, looking like forlorn black crows.

A deep bell clanged. The whispering was stilled. The people looked up. They could see only the gloomy mass of the great jail above the wall and the black sky beyond; what they really sought was hidden from them, but they stood there gazing, as though in momentary expectation of seeing the wall removed. They could see nothing and they knew they would see nothing. Yet they stood there in the cold of the early morning, drawn together by the mysterious magnet of wretched death beyond the wall.

Scarcely one could tell why he had come there; least of all Morel, leaning against a black tree in the darkness across the street. It was dangerous, he knew, but something had drawn him to the jail walls that morning with an irresistible force, and now he stood on the outskirts of the silent crowd, his face almost hidden by the collar of his great-

coat, his eyes shifting uneasily, seeking the darkness for the enemy who might strike at any moment. He should go away, he knew, but something kept him there—something that he could not define, and in spite of the terrible risk he was taking he was aware that nothing could move him from that place until it was all over beyond the walls.

"JEAN."

It was only a whisper, but he started violently.

A few feet away, a woman was standing. She was cheaply clad, shivering with the cold, and no one nearby would have known she had addressed Morel, because she looked straight ahead, her back almost turned to him.

"What are you doing here?" he muttered.

"You must go away, quickly."

"Why?"

"They told Charette—about us."

"Who did?"

"The gang."

"Well?"

"It was in his cell, an hour ago. He says he knows now who gave him up to the police. He cursed you."

"His curses can't hurt me. In another ten minutes he'll be dead. And Benet with him."

"He made the others swear that they would get you."

Morel was silent.

"It's dangerous for you to stay here," she insisted. "Charette told them all that you had lied to them—that you had given him and Benet up to the police because you wanted me. They'll kill you, Jean."

"The morning train," he said softly. "Bonaventure station. Nine o'clock, to the north. Be on it."

"And you? If you go near the station——?"

"I'll be on it. They won't catch me."

She turned a white, frightened face toward him for a moment, but he made an impatient gesture and she sidled away into the darkness. Morel bit his underlip. Women were fools. He was tired of her already. He had the unreasonable resentment toward her that a man feels for the loving woman he no longer loves.

He moved as though to go away, then he hesitated and gazed at the high stone walls across the street again. The side of the jail, beyond, was now brightly illuminated. From a high window was suspended a dazzling light that cast a brilliant beam toward the yard below. This light, he realized, was immediately above the scaffold, and in its cold glare his former comrades, Charette and Benet, were about to meet their deaths. Morel leaned against the tree again. He could not go just yet.

LIKE a rustling breeze over a forest, a subdued whispering had passed over the crowd that now filled the street. Morel's mind raced.

It was true that he had betrayed the pair, but he had always been able to silence the uncomfortable murmurs of his conscience by telling himself that it had been an act of necessity. That the police had protected him, that Charette and Benet had held no suspicion of his treachery, had further seemed to justify himself. He had taken no part in the actual murder of the bank messenger; his part in that affair had been that of the lookout, and when all three escaped it had been agreed that should any one eventually be taken by the police he should protect his companions.

"Why should three hang for one?" Charette had asked.

But something had gone wrong. Morel had wind of it first. They were under suspicion. The police were preparing to jump. Why should he hang with the others, when his hands were free of blood? It was simply a case of self-preservation. He went to the police and gave them the assurance they needed. Charette and Benet were arrested, tried, convicted. Morel had not appeared in the case in any way.

He should not, of course, have taken Charette's woman so soon. He had coveted her for a long time. He was honest enough with himself to admit that the hope of having her had instigated his treachery as much as anything else. But he should have waited until Charette was dead. Now Charette knew; now Charette was convinced of his treachery; now the gang would avenge their leader.

THE crowd beneath the great stone wall had been hushed to silence. The great light shone coldly. The trees creaked. A bell clanged.

From the jail yard came the sound of a hoarse voice, shouting something. . . .

A metallic crash!

The crowd sighed and then the whispering rose like the wind. Morel shivered, but it was not from cold.

AFTER a while the crowd began to disperse. They had seen nothing, but somehow they were vaguely satisfied; they had achieved the grim tremors of proximity to violent death. A door opened at the far end of the wall and a little group of men emerged. These were the reporters and the official witnesses. They fought their way through the mob. The crowd hurled questions at them. How had the pair died? Had they put up a fight? Had they said anything? Had they confessed?

"I'll say they said something," declared one. "They both made a statement. Said a pal of theirs, Morel, had double-crossed them, and swore that it was Morel who turned the Dubroy murder last August."

The crowd clamored for more information and surged eagerly about the man. Others, who had not heard, shouted impatiently: "What? What is it? What did he say?"

Morel sidled off into the gloom. So! The Dubroy murder. That had been Benet's job, and he had been there. Benet had covered up very neatly; they had both been clear of suspicion. But Morel knew that if the police once started to investigate, he would not have a ghost of a chance. He had been there. The watchman had seen him, that was certain. He would be identified. Benet and Charette, on the threshold of death, had sworn he was the slayer. He was lost.

Swiftly, he made his way down a side street, the snow crunching beneath his overshoes. The high stone houses, typical of Montreal, rose to right and left, each with its iron-railed flight of steps. Rows and rows of steps. The street ended in gloom; it was like a gigantic prison corridor. He felt trapped.

He could not help but feel a certain grudging admiration for the fiendish ingenuity of Charette's revenge. On the brink of death, he had precipitated Morel, his enemy, between two fires: the police on one hand, the gangsters on the other. The police, only too anxious to get him out of the way, would pounce on him for the Dubroy murder; the gangsters would seek him out for the betrayal of their leader.

There was still a little time. He paused before a darkened doorway and carefully examined the steps. Snow had fallen earlier in the night and he saw that it was unbroken by footprints. The police, then, had not yet arrived. With chilled fingers he groped for his key, opened the door, and stepped quietly inside.

A gas flame flickered from an uncovered jet in the stark hallway. Morel took off his overshoes, shook the snow from the soles, and carefully brushed it into a corner. He went up the stairs very quietly.

His door was the third to the left in the narrow hall, and he gained it in silence, satisfied that his return had been unobserved and unheard. He lit the gas and sat down on the bed. In spite of the fact that the early morning was very cold and that a heavy chill hung over the lodging house, he found that sweat was standing out on his forehead. Morel groped for a cigarette, but when he was about to light it he abruptly changed his mind. Cigarette smoke might betray the fact that he had been in his room, and he meant to leave no trace.

HE formulated a plan of escape. "If I can leave everything looking as it is, the police may think I haven't been back here. They'll watch the place. The longer they watch, the better it is for me. By that time I'll be on the train and heading north."

For he knew that instant flight was his only hope. It was death if he remained. If he escaped conviction in the Dubroy case, he would not escape assassination by Charette's followers. If he could gain the outskirts of the city before the police threw out their dragnet, he would be able to board the northbound train and join the woman. Once in the north, it would be easy enough to evade pursuit.

MOREL got up from the bed and began going through the drawers of the small bureau. He intended to leave most of his belongings in the room. This would throw the police off the track, and they would assume that he had not yet returned. His mind reverted to the footprint on the doorstep. Well, it didn't matter. The snowfall had ceased several hours ago. The footprint might have been made at any time since midnight. He had been astute enough to take care of the fresh snow in the hallway.

There were a few things he wanted—relics of old crimes, incriminating things that the police might make much of. And then there was money. Not much, but enough to further his flight.

He was startled by his reflection in the bureau mirror. His nerves seemed to leap because he scarcely recognized the face that looked back at him. Morel gazed into the glass and saw that he was very white and that his eyes were heavily shadowed, that his face looked very old. He shrugged. It was just a trick of the gas light.

"Not a murderer's face, anyhow," he muttered. Somehow, with that passion for self-justification that dominates every man, he took a curious pride in his innocence of the crime of blood. Guilty of other crimes he had been, surely, but of murder, never. This had consoled him in his reflections on his betrayal of Charette and Benet. They were killers; they deserved the scaffold. To his own satisfaction, he had managed to justify that treachery. He had been forced into it by an inexorable sequence of events and circumstances.

A heavy banging at the street door sent him into a convulsive fury of movement.

Morel scooped up the money, the papers, the trinkets and jewelry he had taken from the bureau drawers, and plunged them into his pockets. He snatched up his coat, kicked the overshoes far beneath the bed and swiftly turned out the gas.

The smell of gas! They would notice that. They would know that he had been there but a few minutes ago. He sped to the window and quietly opened it a trifle. A gust of cold air swept through the room.

The banging at the street door increased in volume.

"Open up, there! Open up!" a voice was shouting gruffly.

Morel went out into the hallway, closed his door, and locked it. He could hear the landlord sleepily protesting in his room just off the lower hall. Then the padding of the old man's bare feet on the cold floor. It was the sort of lodging-house where such a summons at such an hour was not altogether unknown.

There was a back door leading from the second floor corridor, and it gave upon a balcony from which steps descended to the ground. Morel hastened toward it, but before opening the door he had the forethought to glance out of the window at the side.

He drew back swiftly.

A dark figure in greatcoat and sealskin hat was standing grimly in the snow-covered courtyard.

No escape that way. The landlord was opening the front door. No escape, front or back. He had waited too long.

BACK down the hallway he sped silently. He wished he knew if any of the rooms were empty. Morel dared not take the chance of entering any because this might certainly cause an uproar. At last he came abreast of the door of the room immediately beside his own.

This was the blind man's room.

Morel had often heard the old fellow coming back to his room after a day's begging in the city streets. It always began with the steady tapping of the cane upon the stairs. The old man wheezed horribly as he came along the hall, and money jingled in his pockets. The key rattled in the lock and then the blind man began puttering about his room.

In the case of the fellow in the room at the other side of Morel there was always the scratching of a match and a dull explosive puff with the ignition of the gas, but the blind man had no need of light. The absence of this familiar sound always gave an uncanny air to the noises that followed. Morel could imagine the old fellow moving about in the dark, unconscious of it because he always lived in darkness.

There would be the queer, dead sounds made by an old person alone in the night. The cane was placed in a corner. Garments rustled as the blind man hung his hat and coat on a nail behind the door. Then there would be an avalanche of jingling coins.

He always emptied his pockets upon the bed. The springs would creak as he sat down. He would count his money:

"Five, ten, eleven, twelve—ah, a half-dollar!—sixty-three——" he would drone away as he counted the coppers, the nickels, the dimes, the coins clinking against one another. Once in a while the counting was interrupted by a spasm of coughing and the blind man would get up and stumble about the room in agony.

It seemed interminable. After a time the bed-springs creaked again and he would lie down panting. In a while the counting would be resumed.

This went on every night. When the money was counted the coins were evidently placed in a bag of some kind and hidden beneath the mattress. Then the blind man, wheezing painfully, undressed and went to bed.

MOREL tried the door, but it was locked. He produced his own key and tried it. To his surprise and relief, the key fitted. The lock snapped back. He stole into the room, closed the door, and locked it behind him.

Downstairs he could hear a stamping of feet as men entered the lower hallway. The landlord was protesting in French. He listened, and heard his own name.

"Morel—is he in yet?"

No. Morel had not returned. He went out a little before midnight.

"We'll see. Where's his room?"

Crouching in the darkness, listening to the wheezy breathing of the blind man on the bed, Morel heard the heavy clump of feet as the officers came up the stairs. The landlord directed them to his door.

"It's locked. Give me your keys."

A jangling of keys as the landlord handed them over. The officer tried several before he was able to open the door. Then they all went noisily into the room; some one lit the gas.

"Not here," growled the man who had demanded the keys. "Are you sure he hasn't been back to-night?"

The landlord was positive. He would have heard Morel come in. But M'sieu Morel often stayed out all night.

"All his stuff is here," said another constable. "Trunk, suitcase, everything."

"We've beat him to it. He'll be back. We'll watch the street for him. The sooner we get out of here the better. If he came back now and saw the house lit up, he'd clear out in a hurry."

The officers, grumbling among themselves, left the room and closed the door behind them. They made considerable noise descending the stairs and Morel could hear murmurs from other rooms along the hallway; the other lodgers were curious.

THEN, to his consternation, he heard a gasp from the darkness, then a creaking of bed-springs. He held his breath. The frosted window was a gray rectangle at the end of the room and there was only a faint light, but he knew, as surely as though he could see, that the blind man had half-risen from the pillow.

There was not a sound in the little room, but Morel knew that some animal instinct had warned the blind man of his presence. He was right.

"Who's there?" demanded a querulous voice.

Morel did not dare breathe. He crouched by the door.

"There's some one in the room," croaked the blind man. "I know it. I know there's some one here. What do you want?"

Morel heard the street door close with a bang. He could even hear the crunching footsteps in the snow as the policemen moved off down the street. That danger, at least, was over for the time. The constables would go on guard at either end of the street, to trap him when he returned, as they expected he would return. But he had formulated a plan of escape, a plan that had flashed into his mind when he

had first glimpsed the blind man's door.

He got to his feet. The movement did not escape the blind man.

"Who are you?" he screeched. "What are you doing here?" His old voice was tremulous with fright.

"Keep quiet," rasped Morel. "Keep quiet, you fool. It is nothing."

HE LIT a match, found the gas-jet, the stop-cock of which was rusty from disuse, and the light flared up with a sudden puff. It showed a narrow cell of a room, identical with his own. The cheap bed occupied more than half the space. There was a battered trunk by the window and a rickety wash-stand in one corner. The blind man's clothes were strewn untidily about. Morel's sweeping glance encompassed the shapeless hat, the long black coat, the cane in the corner, the black spectacles on the wash-stand. The place was indescribably foul; a heavy, musty odor hung like a pall.

"What is it?" demanded the blind man, his teeth chattering.

He lay in a welter of dirty blankets on the bed. His head was thrown back, revealing his scrawny neck. His sightless eyes stared fixedly at Morel. He was so thin, so bald, and his yellow skin was so transparent that his head was like a skull, for the dim light emphasized the shadows. His bony fingers clutched at the coverlet and his purple lips were drawn back from his toothless gums.

"Who are you?" he snarled. "What do you want? Go away. I'll call the landlord!"

"One squawk out of you and I'll choke you," Morel said quietly, drawing closer to the bed. "I mean it!"

"Murder!" shrieked the blind man suddenly. He looked like a trapped animal, twitching his malevolent old head this way and that, as though vainly trying to catch sight of the intruder.

"Be quiet, will you?" hissed Morel, clapping his hand over the old man's mouth. He pressed the blind man's head back on the pillow and held him firmly despite his desperate writhings. "Listen, you old fool," he went on. "The police are after me. Let me hide here for a little while. I won't hurt you—but if you make a racket, so help me God I'll do you in!"

After a few gurgles the old man nodded his head vigorously, and Morel released him. The blind man lay back, panting, but he said nothing more.

MOREL sat on the bed for a while, but when it became evident that the blind man had resolved on silence he got up and went over to the wash-stand, picking up the black glasses and shapeless hat. He put them on. There was a small mirror in the room—not because of any demand on the part of the tenant, but because every room in the lodging house was so provided. Morel brushed the dust from it and scrutinized his image in the glass. The effect was not exactly as he wished. The spectacles and the hat provided a certain amount of disguise but not enough. He put on the long coat, turning the collar up about his ears, and wrapped the blind man's muffler about his throat so that it covered the lower part of his chin.

That was better.

The room was dim and shadowy; the glasses were so dark that they cut off practically all light; the gas flame seemed pallid and frozen. It would not be difficult to enact the

part of a blind man in these spectacles, he thought. Morel pulled the hat well down on his forehead, seized the cane, and then assumed the peculiar crouch of the blind man. He noted with satisfaction that the tails of the oversize coat dragged slightly on the floor.

IN SPITE of the gloom a movement in the mirror caught his eye. He had become so absorbed in perfecting his disguise that he had forgotten the man on the bed.

Morel wheeled about. The blind man was at the door, his hand on the knob. With one bound Morel reached him, but somehow the old fellow slipped beneath his outstretched arm, and at the same instant he gave a screech of terror.

Morel struck out blindly with the heavy cane. He was handicapped by the dark spectacles and the long coat. Above all things, the blind man must not get away, nor must he be allowed to shout again. The cane thudded down on something yielding, and he heard a smothered groan. He struck again, and he saw the blind man slump back onto the bed.

He drew back. The old fellow was sprawled out on his back and he was groaning. Morel listened, terrified. There was a deep, gasping inhalation that seemed to tear the frail frame, then a groan of agony. All the blind man's energies seemed concerted toward his laborious gasps for breath. Morel tried to shut his ears to the abominable sounds. With horrible regularity the gasps and groans alternated. The blind man lay there in his eternal darkness and fought for the breath of life. Then, suddenly, the groans ceased; the old man clutched the coverlet and lay still.

At first Morel could hardly realize the man was dead. He took off the black spectacles mechanically. There lay the old fellow, silent and rigid. He was gone. Nothing could be done. The blind man had groaned his way to the deeper darkness of death, and that was the end of him.

And as Morel's gaze fell on the blood-stained cane still in his hand he felt helpless and alone, frightened and puzzled in the face of a bewildering destiny that seemed to have been sweeping him on to this culminating catastrophe since the day of his birth. All the circumstances of his obscure existence appeared to have been directed toward this hideous climax, and now he was stripped of the last vestige of his pride, because the thing had happened that he had resolved would never happen—he had taken a human life. Always he had prided himself on that. He had been a criminal, yes, but a criminal clever enough to keep beyond the shadow of the noose. And now here lay a man dead before him, slain almost by accident, one might say, and Morel was his murderer in the eyes of the law. He felt suddenly sick and terrified.

After a while he regained control of his nerves, although he kept his eyes averted from the corpse on the bed. He still had the disguise, and he was satisfied that with any luck at all he would be able to leave the house without detection. He would leave the house, run the gauntlet of the police guard at the end of the street, and even yet gain the outskirts of the city in time to catch the train. Why, in that disguise it would be possible to go boldly to the station in the heart of the city.

The body would not be discovered for many hours. The blind man

often spent an entire day in his room, for he had been a sickly old fellow. In this lodging-house people minded their own business. That, no doubt, had been the reason no one had come to investigate the blind man's last shout—even if it had been heard. It was a lodging-house of shady characters who lived to themselves and rigorously suppressed their curiosities.

So Morel waited in the silent room, and gradually the frosted window became pale with the approaching dawn.

AN ALARM clock trilled faintly from a room down the hall.

Some one clumped down the stairs. The street door banged. In the distance he heard the chiming of the church bells, faint and clear, swelling over the roofs of the city.

He thought of the money hidden under the mattress. With some repugnance he groped for it and his hand closed upon a leather wallet and a bulky bag of coins. The blind man had evidently mistrusted banks.

Morel left the coins and withdrew the wallet. It was stuffed with bills. He counted them and the amount made him gasp. He gazed at the corpse on the bed with a feeling amounting almost to respect. The old miser!

He took out the bills and stuffed the wallet beneath the mattress again. He began to feel more at ease. His own resources had been limited and he had been worrying lest they should be insufficient to further his escape. Now he felt the security of comparative wealth.

Then he decided that he would not join the woman.

"To hell with her!" he muttered. The fact that she would be ostracized by the gang, by every one she knew, mattered nothing. He was tired of her, anyway. And, besides, she would be dangerous. Women were always dangerous.

He donned the black spectacles again and adjusted his costume. He was of about the same build as the dead man, and he was confident that he could carry out his plan. Morel turned out the gas after wiping the bloodstains from the cane and let himself quietly out the door.

FEELING his way before him, tapping with the cane in the manner of the blind man, he stepped out into the hall.

His heart was beating quickly.

"Tap—tap—tap," went the cane. Morel imagined it was creating an uproarious clamor in that silent house. He assumed a more emphatic crouch. The spectacles were so dark that he made his way with difficulty, and at the head of the stairs he had genuine need of the cane. Then, one by one, he descended the steps.

He could see the landlord, his collar off, his vest unbuttoned, his bootless feet resting on the table, tilted back in an armchair and drinking beer in the hallway below. The landlord glanced up as he approached, then reached for the beer bottle, tilted back his head, and took a long drink, his Adam's apple bobbing up and down. He withdrew the bottle with an explosive "Paagh!" wiped his mouth with the back of his hand and picked up a newspaper from the table.

Morel moved in a sort of twilight through the narrow hall, and shuffled toward the street door. He did not turn his head when the landlord muttered, *"B'jour."* He croaked, *"B'jour,"* in reply, fumbled for the

door knob, then shuffled out into the street.

It was snowing. The cold flakes stung his face. He was aware of a growing excitement. At least, he had escaped from the house.

Morel made his way down the narrow street, feeling his way along with the cane.

At the end of the block stood a huge figure in uniform. Morel passed within a foot of the policeman, but the officer gave him only a passing glance.

He turned down the street to his left. He judged that it was only a few minutes past seven o'clock. He had time to catch an earlier train than the one he had told the woman to take. There was little doubt of his escape now. Even if he met any of the gang, they would never penetrate his disguise.

There was justice in the world, after all. His conscience was clear, and although he knew that the hand of man was against him he could still justify his own actions. He was a traitor to his kind, but it had been through necessity; he was a murderer, but it had been by accident.

So thinking, he shuffled on through the snow. In a little while now he would be safe.

FOOTSTEPS crunched toward him. A heavy figure loomed suddenly ahead.

Morel felt a tremor run through him. In spite of the dark glasses, he recognized the man. It was Lefebvre, his former comrade, and comrade of Benet and Charette. And he knew that Lefebvre was seeking him. There was no other reason for the man's being in that neighborhood. He knew that Lefebvre, if he found him, would shoot him on sight.

Lefebvre was immediately in front of him now. He was striding along through the snow, his head thrust forward, his cruel lips set, his hands plunged in the pockets of his coat. The street ahead and behind was otherwise deserted.

Morel tapped his way ahead. Lefebvre scrutinized him coldly and without interest, then went by, the snow crunching beneath his feet.

Morel continued on his way, his heart thudding with relief. Then he wondered if Lefebvre had not suspected. The fellow had always been noted for his sharp eyes. If he could pass Lefebvre in that disguise he could escape any one.

Quite instinctively he turned his head to see if Lefebvre had continued on toward the lodging-house. In the fleeting second before he recollected that he was playing a part he could see Lefebvre standing stock still in the middle of the white street, gazing back at him.

And even as it flashed on him that by this involuntary and injudicious move he had betrayed himself he saw Lefebvre fling up his arm, he felt a dull blow on the chest at the same instant as the revolver barked, then a terrible weakness swept over him and he tumbled down into the snow.

After that came darkness.

Lefebvre, casting his weapon aside, plunged down the nearest alleyway. That there was something vaguely reminiscent of Morel in that blind man, he had know from the start. And now he knew that his judgment had been correct and that his dead comrades had been avenged.

For a blind man does not look back.

"It can't be so!" he cried hysterically.

The Cleverness of the Baron de Cittabola

By MURRAY LEINSTER

The Baron had only his cleverness to pit against tremendous wealth and all the protection it could buy. And the heart of a lady was involved. But the Baron was not abashed, nor had he any need to be—as you will agree when you've finished this story.

I

THE Baron de Cittabola surveyed a gondola laden with tourists who tipped lavishly and spent extravagantly and generally spoiled life in Venice for persons of his own slender means. He sighed faintly. More and more it was being borne in upon him that he must acquire cash in one fashion or another, and the idea annoyed him. He did not like to think seriously about anything, and certainly not about money.

He nodded to the ancient servant who opened the door for him.

"The *Contesa?*" he asked. "How are you, Filipo?"

The servant beamed.

"*Bene*, Signor Baron, *bene!*" He flung the door wide. "The Signor Drake is within."

The Baron sighed again.

"Ah, my rival," he remarked mildly. "Filipo, this must be stopped. If he proposes to her many more times, she may accept him, and then I shall be broken-hearted and shall have to find the money to drink myself to death."

The servant shook his head.

"But she will not accept him, Sig-

nor Baron," he said with conviction. "He is only rich, while you——"

"I suppose," commented the Baron severely, "that you are about to say that I am clever."

The servant grinned a wide and toothless grin that was an assent.

"But cleverness is a snare and a delusion," advised the Baron oracularly. "Avoid it, Filipo. Avoid it. It has left me without a *centesima*."

HE FOLLOWED the old man through halls full of antiquated grandeur until he came to the huge, high-ceilinged drawing-room which looked out upon the Canal of San Marco through discreetly curtained windows. The *Contesa* was sitting in an ancient, carved chair that had been made more centuries before than she liked to think about.

She was indubitably lovely. The Baron looked at her with intense appreciation. For one thing, she was in her very early twenties. For another, she had the perfect, cameo-like features of a Raphael madonna, and the clear skin which demonstrates a distaste for cosmetics but which few women can contrive. And then, too, there were times when a certain bland, angelic mischief could sparkle in her liquid brown eyes, and—not to be ignored in cataloging her charms—she was a widow.

She looked up reproachfully as the Baron bent over her hand.

"Carlo," she admonished, "you have interrupted at a very inconvenient time. Signor Drake was just paying me his addresses."

The Baron turned to smile amiably upon Drake.

"I am desolate," he said cheerfully, "that I interrupted, but overjoyed that he did not finish. You might have accepted him."

"I was thinking of it," she said severely.

The Baron sank lazily into a chair.

"I shall forbid the bans," he protested. "I like the Signor Drake. He has many golden qualities which I do not possess. He is doubtless all that a husband should be. But I object to his being your husband, Beatrice. Signor"—he turned to Drake—"if you marry Beatrice, you will deprive me of my only occupation, that of trying to persuade her to marry me."

THERE was a moment's silence, during which the *Contesa* smiled mischievously and Drake stirred uneasily. He was in his forties and his fourth million, and took himself rather seriously.

"Think," said the Baron poetically, "you will ravish Italy of all her treasures. First you acquired the Squilanti plate, an indubitable masterpiece of our friend, Benvenuto Cellini. Unfortunately, the law concerning national treasures of art has not been applied to it, and you may carry it away to America. And then you acquired the Telluto diamond, both historic and priceless. True, it will be quite illegal for you to take that from the country, but it is nevertheless a treasure, and you will probably contrive to smuggle it away as well as the other. But now, signor, when you propose to take from us the *Contesa* de San Veccio, more rare, more precious, and more beautiful still . . ."

The Baron waved his hands and sat down comfortably.

"You see, Countess," said Drake heavily, pointedly ignoring the Baron, "I am, after all, a very wealthy man. To one reared in luxury, that is in itself an essential for happiness. And as for social position, with your charm and my millions . . ."

"True," agreed the *Contesa*, smiling wickedly at the Baron. "But, *mi caro* Signor Drake, there is Carlo, here."

"I've looked him up," said Drake. "Young, yes. Handsome, yes. Attractive—people say so. But penniless."

"He is very clever," protested the *Contesa*, smiling at the Baron.

"But what will that get him?" asked Drake practically. "Suppose you married him? What good would his cleverness be?"

"I might adopt a career of crime," suggested the Baron mildly.

"You couldn't get away with it." Drake dismissed the idea with a wave of his hand.

"Oh, but Carlo could!" insisted the *Contesa*, smiling. "I am quite sure he would make an excellent thief."

"My ancestors," said the Baron with a fine air of pride, "were celebrated in the times of the Borgias."

"In short," the *Contesa* went on in a tone calculated to end the discussion, "you have each your charms. I cannot choose between you. And now let me give you tea."

THE Baron, asking permission by a look, lighted a cigarette. Drake was thinking, his eyes shrewd.

"Look here," he said suddenly. "Suppose you make it a test between us. I take it, the choice is between us two?"

"I would not dream of marrying any one else but one of you," the *Contesa* assured him smilingly.

"The Baron, here," went on Drake ponderously, "says he is clever enough to be a thief. I say he isn't. Let him try to steal from me—say, the Telluto diamond. Don't know why I bought it, anyway. I can't take it out of Italy. They made me put up a bond that I'd keep it in the country. If you"—he addressed the Baron directly—"steal that, get it out of the country, and sell it, the Countess marries you. You'll have enough to live on then. If I catch you stealing the stone, she marries me."

"But how, signor," queried the *Contesa* mischievously, "would you be sure that I would keep the bargain with you?"

"He'd be in jail," said Drake, with certain hard lines about his mouth, "and I'd refuse to prosecute only after you'd married me."

The *Contesa* paled a little. The Baron smiled faintly.

"I—I do not like that," said the *Contesa*, shuddering.

"Of course, if he's afraid . . ." Drake waved a pudgy hand again.

The Baron puffed a cloud of smoke toward the ceiling. Only one who knew him well would have known that he was angry.

"But of course I accept, Signor Drake," he said gently. "I shall steal your diamond, most certainly."

"Conditions," announced Drake curtly, "are that I give you a chance to spy out the land. The Countess has been good enough to rent me a floor of her house, so I live just upstairs, while I'm in Venice. I'll take you up and show you around."

"I should be charmed," said the Baron politely.

"The Countess is neutral," Drake went on in businesslike tones. "She doesn't help either of us. You've got to get the diamond to America, and prove to me that you've done it, without getting caught. I'll do anything I can to keep you from stealing it, or getting away with it. Outside of enlisting the aid of the Countess, everything's fair."

"Agreed," said the Baron mildly. "When does this contest start?"

"Right now!" Drake rose to his feet.

"I SHOULD like to write a letter," said the Baron, frowning thoughtfully. "There is apt to be some talk about this. It is no light matter to violate the law against taking national treasures out of the country. Beatrice, will you lend me pen and paper?"

Looking from one to the other, a little frightened, she pulled the bell-cord and had Filipo bring writing-materials.

For a matter of perhaps a quarter of an hour the Baron wrote, pausing now and then to frown over some knotty point. Once he smiled at some notion that came into his head. He sealed the envelope carefully and gave it to the waiting servant.

"Filipo," he said, "I shall expect you to mail this yourself. And I shall expect you to go at once, without delay, to the post-office. I believe my boatman is waiting outside."

"*Bene*, Signor Baron, *bene*," said Filipo, beaming. "*Al momento.*"

THEY heard his footsteps going down the halls, hurrying to the door upon an errand for his beloved Baron de Cittabola. Then the Baron smiled amiably at Drake.

"The contest is begun, signor."

"You—you do not mean it, really?" The *Contesa* was frightened a little, and still somewhat dubious.

"I do," said Drake. He looked at her shrewdly. "You see, Countess, I figure you rather like the Baron, here. You'd marry me rather than see him go to jail. And I figure that I've touched his pride, so he'll go through with it in spite of anything now. I'm pretty well satisfied with the arrangement. It didn't take me long to work out the idea, did it? I'm pretty prompt."

The *Contesa* tilted her chin.

"Then, signor, since you are so pleased, I shall not protest."

The Baron smiled again.

"Suppose we go and spy out the land, then," he suggested. "But I pray you, signor, do not expect me to be precipitate. Doubtless your treasures are so adeptly guarded that it will take some time to conceive of a plan for robbing you."

"Guarded? I guess they are," Drake assured him, in some satisfaction. "I rented one floor of the Countess' *palazzo* for two months, and I put in burglar-alarms everywhere. And the Telluto diamond is in a fire-proof, nickel-steel American safe that none of your continental crooks are likely to get into."

"It seems," commented the Baron, as he followed his guide, "that you have most of the advantage on your side."

"I'm pretty well satisfied," Drake grunted. He wore the proverbial expression of the cat that swallowed the canary. In his own mind he was carefully dodging the pleasing conviction that he had "framed" the Baron.

THEY went upstairs, and the Baron smiled amiably at the ruthless changes Drake had made in the Old-World splendor of the *palazzo*. There was an office with a flat-topped desk where once had been a lady's boudoir, and the squat and ugly safe he had mentioned was most incongruously set in a room that had been a gem of Renaissance decoration. There were museum-like cases about this latter room, containing the items Drake had collected on this trip to Italy.

"I'll show you the diamond first," he said with a self-satisfied air.

He stooped and spun the knob of the safe, then pulled at the great doors and rose with a small bronze box in his hand.

"Here it is."

He pressed a spring, with a little fumbling, and the top sprang up. And then there glowed a strange pink flame from the box. It was a diamond, perhaps fifteen or sixteen carats, and of a color that is rarest of all the diamond tints. One may purchase yellow diamonds by the pound, mostly from Brazil, and blue-whites from Johannesburg, and there is even a green diamond of thirty carats somewhere in Russia that was once a part of the Imperial treasures. But a pink diamond is the rarest and most highly prized of all.

The Baron took the case in his hand and lifted the glittering thing into the air. Men had died in strange and devious ways for the possession of the stone. At least two women had died by poison. A war had been fought over it, and a treason purchased by its gift that had made history. There was every reason for the Italian government to declare the diamond a national treasure, permitted to remain in private hands, but not permitted to be sold to go out of the country, nor permitted ever to cross the frontier. It was history, and beauty —and danger.

THE Baron de Cittabola closed the box with something as near reverence as he ever allowed himself.

"Signor," he said, somewhat disturbed, "that is too beautiful! I begin to regret my bargain now. I do not like the idea of having to carry that with me to America, nor of dickering with thieves for its purchase."

Drake grinned.

"Wait till you get hold of it," he said contentedly. "I'm going to call one of my men now, and warn him against you. You'll have a fine time stealing that."

He replaced the box in the safe and locked the safe again.

"By the way," he added with something of malice, "in case you noticed the combination as I opened the safe, I might as well tell you that it will be changed within the hour."

The Baron allowed himself to show a trace of annoyance.

"You think of everything, signor," he protested.

"Go and look at the rest of my stuff if you like." Drake waved his pudgy hand comfortably. "I'll talk to my man."

The Baron obligingly examined the rest of the *objets d'art* that were placed about. One, a fifteenth century plaster piece, he scrutinized exhaustively, but put down without comment. The *Contesa* gave a little cry as he lifted the Squilanti plate. It was Benvenuto Cellini at his best. Massive, incredibly luxuriant in ornamentation, it was one of those silver colossi the princes of the Middle Ages loved to display in proof of their wealth. It wearied the Baron to hold it in his hands.

WHEN he put it down, Drake was just finishing a low-toned conversation with a man who had all the ear-marks of a private detective. The man looked at the Baron with a scowl of suspicion. Drake made a gesture and his adherent sauntered to the door, against which he leaned so that he could watch the Baron.

"This," said the Baron, almost enthusiastically, "is the best of Cellini's work that I have seen—in plate.

Signor, you should not carry that away! It is a masterpiece!"

Drake puffed out a little.

"The best is none too good for me," he said with a trace of truculence. "I'm going to use it, regularly, as a fruit-salver."

The Baron surveyed him reproachfully and shrugged his shoulders. Then Drake moved restlessly.

"I'm going to have all the burglar alarms changed," he said suggestively. "You've had a pretty good chance to see how things are guarded. Now, we'll see if you can get away with that diamond."

"I allow myself a little time," observed the Baron. "But—er—signor, though I must admit your collection is admirable, and this plate, in particular, is beyond praise . . ."

"What?" Drake no longer was affable. He was a business man confronting an adversary.

"That bit of plaster," went on the Baron mildly, "is spurious. If I were you, I would throw it into the ash-can."

Drake grunted.

"I picked that out myself," he said curtly. "Found it myself. It was a bargain."

HE LED the way toward the door, though the Baron had given no hint of leaving. The Baron smiled faintly and followed. He allowed himself to be conducted to his gondola, and parted from the *Contesa* with his usual amiable courtliness.

"Say," said Drake, beginning to gloat a little, "you still think you'll be able to steal that diamond?"

"It is excellently guarded," said the Baron, smiling faintly.

Drake puffed up.

"Just about how long," he asked with heavy irony, "do you suppose it will take you to steal it? About a thousand years? I've put six men to guarding it now, and there'll be three of them in the room, night and day, from now on."

The Baron seated himself leisurely and nodded to his gondolier to move on. He lighted a cigarette with easy grace.

"Hardly a thousand years, signor," he remonstrated mildly. "I believe that you spoke of yourself as very prompt. So, signor, am I. I have already stolen your diamond."

And then he said a sentence rapidly in Italian, and the gondolier began to paddle like one possessed.

II

IT WAS at five in the afternoon that the Baron de Cittabola politely told the Signor Drake that he had stolen the latter's historic diamond. By half-past, five of Drake's private detectives overtook the Baron's gondola and found the Baron placidly seated at a little table in a café whose terrace overlooked the Grand Canal, sipping pleasedly at a frosted glass. By five-thirty-five the Baron was under arrest, with no less than four of Drake's men exhibiting their credentials and jealously demanding to be present when he was searched. By six he had been searched exhaustively, without result. By seven his gondolier had been searched with similar exhaustiveness and was undergoing an Italian third degree which was rather more inquisitory than anything known elsewhere. The net result of his ordeal was a perfervid oath, convincing from the very terror of the man, that he had rowed the Baron directly from the *palazzo* of the Signor Drake to the café in which he had later been found. And the net result of the much milder interrogation to which the Baron placidly submitted himself

was the Baron's amused denial that he knew anything of the Telluto diamond except that the Signor Dfake had showed it to him and immediately after locked it up.

The gondola was searched. It was hauled out of the water and its seams opened, to make sure that the stone was not hidden in the pitch. Its cushions were ripped to ribbons. Even the café was subjected to a search so minute that the proprietor forever after cursed the police at every mention of their name.

And the Baron was released. There was nothing to hold him on. There was no obvious motive for him to steal the jewel, and for decency's sake Drake could not explain about the bet. But he could set a flock of private detectives to watch the Baron, and he did.

For a day it amused the Baron. For a second it did not particularly annoy him. But on the third it bored him to extinction to have unobtrusive figures in derby hats following him about in gondolas, and making particularly transparent attempts to seem interested in something other than his movements.

FOUR days of it wore out his patience, and he made preparations to leave Venice. He had an excellent idea that he would be prevented from going far—his own government would be anxious about the diamond—but the attempt would serve his purpose admirably.

He slipped out of Venice not altogether invisibly, and, rather to his amazement, was not stopped. Once on the mainland, he hired a car and exacted pledges of the profoundest secrecy, thereby insuring that he would promptly be reported to the police. Then he began a hasty flight along the coast.

He had expected to make good his way for quite a hundred miles, but at the fiftieth mile a heavy motor car overhauled him. He turned, smiling, to greet the police, and saw half a dozen young men in civilian clothes which nevertheless smacked of the sea.

They plunged upon him and at a cost of four black eyes, several sore heads, and a good deal of their self-confidence proceeded to sit upon him in the road. There they took every garment from him, individually, and put them carefully away. They inspected the scene of the struggle with microscopic attention, and stripped the motor-car in which he had ridden of every possible thing that could be detected, including even the radiator and the cushions. They ripped off the upholstery and examined the tires. They even dissected the carbureter and disconnected the gasoline tank. Then they departed, carrying the Baron with them, and leaving his hired chauffeur quite stupefied, quite helplessly bound and gagged, and utterly bewildered because he had seen them thrust into his pocket bank-notes sufficient to pay twice over for the damage they had done.

BUT the Baron smiled serenely as they dodged off the main roads down toward the sea.

"I say," he said pleasantly, "would one of you mind giving me a cigarette?"

A sailor with a split lip and a black eye obliged him.

"Say, buddy," he said without rancor, "you put up a good scrap."

"Thank you," said the Baron. "It was rather good fun while it lasted." He puffed contentedly for a time. "The Signor Drake has had me kidnapped, is it not so?"

"That's it," answered one of his

guards cheerfully. "He says he's goin' to get back that diamond. Say, did you really cop it off?"

"It was a bet," he explained. "He said it could not be done."

"I bet," suggested one of the group—"I bet you swallowed it. Mr. Drake, he's going to have you X-rayed, anyhow."

The Baron sighed.

"He thinks of everything," he commented with a trace of depression. "If he keeps on, I shall begin to be alarmed."

But aside from the fact that as he could not use his hands his cigarette ash kept dropping down his neck, he did not seem disturbed.

III

THE Baron looked up languidly as Drake bustled into the saloon of the yacht. The Baron held a large, green-backed book in his hand, and was smoking one of Drake's cigarettes. He was clad in a suit of clothes Drake had supplied him, and close beside his elbow was a glass that had been filled with Drake's liquids.

"Ah, Signor Drake," he said amiably. "I trust the X-ray photographs came out excellently."

Drake grunted an assent.

"You didn't swallow it," he admitted. "And my men are pretty sure you didn't have it on you when they kidnapped you."

The Baron nodded.

"They were thorough," he said reminiscently. "It was a beautiful fight. How is *la Signora Contesa?*"

"Well," replied Drake heavily. "She will join us presently. She came when I told her I had kidnapped you."

The Baron rustled the pages of his book.

"By the way," he said idly, "where are we bound? I have no idea of our destination."

"New York," said Drake briefly.

The Baron's expression became pleased.

"And here I have been reading the New York telephone book!" he remarked amiably. "A most informing volume."

THE *Contesa* entered. She nodded to both of the men, though it was easy to see that she was somewhat angry.

"Signor Drake," she said coldly, "a person has been searching my belongings. Have you any idea of the cause?"

Drake tried to look apologetic and failed.

"One of my men suggested that the Baron might have hidden the diamond——" he began.

"And that I would not have known of it?" She looked at him queerly, as if not quite sure whether to be angry or not. "Oh, signor, you are amusing! Does it occur to you that Carlo gave his word not to enlist my aid, or even to accept it?"

Drake waved a pudgy hand.

"By stretching a point, your unconscious aid might be considered within the bargain," he pointed out. "I take no chances."

He began to stroll uncomfortably up and down the salon, his hands behind his back. All the wealth of the owner of the yacht had been drawn upon to make it the last word in luxury. The rugs were thick and soft. Really excellent paintings hung upon the walls between the portholes. There was even a piece of statuary here and there, and the bit of fifteenth-century plaster the Baron had deplored. Drake was proud of that. Usually, he depended upon brokers and art-dealers for his purchases, but this one

article he had discovered himself in an antique-shop.

The Baron watched him idly.

"And how has your collection fared during the voyage?" he asked politely. "I trust our friend Cellini's plate was undamaged."

"It was," said Drake curtly.

"But that bit of plaster," protested the Baron. "I have been hoping to see it fall and break. It is quite worthless, signor, despite its air of antiquity."

DRAKE gazed at it, frowning. It was an ornate thing, full of elaborate figures and flowers, with many dust-gathering holes and crevices. Drake suddenly struck one fist upon the other palm.

"By George!" he said suddenly. "You palmed my diamond while you were looking at it. You said you'd not take aid from the Countess. But——" His eyes had a hard gleam, as with an inspiration. "And you said I ought to throw this into the garbage——"

"I think," corrected the Baron mildly, "that I said the ash-can."

"And it didn't occur to you that I might see that there were holes in it which would hold a diamond, right after you'd palmed it," said Drake ironically. "You talked too much, my friend!"

He snatched the plaster from the wall and crashed it across his knees. It broke into a million pieces.

"Bravo!" cried the Baron, as Drake began to examine the fragments. "A noble deed, signor!"

But as Drake pawed the pieces, crumbling them to make sure the diamond was not hidden among them, he began to turn red, then almost purple. When he stood up his face was almost apoplectic in hue.

"Damn you!" he cried, his voice shaking. "You deliberately taunted me into breaking that—and it was five hundred years old!"

The Baron had stooped and picked up a little fragment. Drake watched him in sudden suspicion that checked even his anger.

The Baron picked delicately at the plaster. He unrolled something he finally got free.

"Ah, newspaper!" he said with a pleased air. "Look, signor. They put it in to strengthen the plaster, which is evidently of inferior quality. It is—it is the *Giornale!* I have not seen a newspaper for days! Now I shall have amusing reading-matter."

Drake turned crimson and swung upon his heel. He fairly rushed from the salon to cool off outside.

IV

THE yacht nosed into her berth, assisted by a puffing, grunting tug. The Baron de Cittabola stood upon the deck and watched the process interestedly.

"That large man, with the red nose," he observed, "looks like a person who would vote against liquor. I shall try to hit him on the back of the neck. I have been saving corks for target practice."

His hand came out of his pocket, with a champagne-cork, still laden with its heavy tin-foil covering, in it. He threw with a quick jerk, and the man with the red nose swore. The Baron beamed.

"I did not know I was so excellent a shot," he said happily. "Now I shall aim for his ear."

He threw again and again. The *Contesa* stood beside him, a trifle apprehensive, but the Baron was seemingly as happy as a schoolboy. He flung his tiny missiles apparently haphazardly, but every one landed on the deck of the tug. When his pockets were empty he stood

shaking his head reproachfully at the howled execrations of the large man with the red nose.

"I do not think he was well raised," he said regretfully. "His language, Beatrice, is atrocious."

HE TURNED away, light-heartedly, to observe Drake looking at him with a grim smile.

"That's an old stunt, Baron," sneered Drake, "putting stuff in champagne-corks and throwing them at somebody. They'll all be gathered in, and your red-nosed friend, too."

"But you will not cut open the corks?" asked the Baron in alarm.

Drake allowed himself to grin.

"That's the idea."

The Baron's expressive features showed dismay. He opened his mouth as if to protest, but then shrugged.

"Beatrice," he said calmly enough, "I am undone."

The *Contesa* turned pale. Drake barked a laugh.

"On several counts, Baron," he concurred cheerfully. "Attempted smuggling, stealing my diamond, and taking it out of Italy. I guess the Countess will do her best to keep you out of jail, though."

The *Contesa* was pale indeed.

"Y-yes," she said miserably. "Anything."

"I ought to go to jail for them," said the Baron ruefully. "But I should have known I was no poet, in English. If you insist upon reading them, signor, pray remember that English is not my native tongue. I would do better in Italian."

"Reading? Them?"

Drake looked at him suspiciously.

"My poems." The Baron sighed. "I was amusing myself. . . ."

Drake dismissed his talk as foolishness when a sailor came up with his hat full of champagne-corks.

"Wait here, Bryan," Drake instructed him curtly. "You saw him throw these. Now watch me cut them open."

He sliced one neatly in half. It had been hollowed out, and within there was a wisp of paper, not a diamond. Drake pulled it out ginferly, looking for the crimson glow of the stone. But there was nothing but the paper, from which, on the impulse of the moment, he read aloud:

> The plaster was a modern fake,
> But it deceived poor Signor Drake.

Drake turned purple. He sliced another cork. A second slip met his eye. He was unable to resist it.

> The signor made a clever bet.
> Alas! He has not won it yet.

The sailor coughed. Drake turned livid with rage and slit open cork after cork. Each one contained a slip of paper. Each slip contained a little couplet. Each couplet wounded Drake's vanity. He went on doggedly to the end. The couplets fascinated him. But when he had finished he had only an incurable hatred for the Baron. He was no longer satisfied merely to marry the *Contesa* and triumph over the Baron. He wanted to injure his rival, irreparably. He walked away fairly quivering with fury, but the Baron smiled amiably at his back.

"I think," he said thoughtfully, "that I have insulted him to such an extent that he will not invite me to visit at his house."

BUT Drake was not yet quite through. He sent a curt message to the Baron that the Baron would still consider himself Drake's guest, or he would be rearrested in

New York on a charge of stealing the diamond in Italy. He added a pithy reminder that arrest in New York meant the necessity of high bail or jail pending trial.

The Baron, shrugging, went to the huge Madison Avenue house of Drake. For two days he was practically a prisoner. His only communication with the outer world was a cable to his bankers in Italy to send him money with which to return to that country. But on the next day Drake came to him in a towering rage, only partly dissembled.

"You say, Baron," he asked with heavy sarcasm, "that you stole my diamond?"

"Yes," admitted the Baron amiably. "It was very simple."

"And I dare say you brought it to the United States?"

"Oh, yes. Or, rather, I secured its transport to the United States."

"Could you produce it?"

"I would need a little freedom," said the Baron, shrugging his shoulders. "Naturally, if you were to discover its whereabouts, I should lose both it and my bet."

Drake sat down. The *Contesa* was looking from one to the other curiously.

"You both are talking very strangely," she protested.

"I rather doubt your word, Baron," said Drake deliberately. "Would you like to make a bet on it? Countess"—he turned to the *Contesa*—"would you have much use for the Baron if he turned out to be a bluffer?"

The *Contesa* tilted up her chin.

"I have great confidence in Carlo," she said coldly.

DRAKE wagged his head. He felt that he hated the Baron, and he wanted not only to humiliate him but to injure him.

"I'll tell you what, Baron," he said triumphantly. "I know you've got an old house or so, and a rattle-trap castle. I'll bet you a hundred thousand dollars against what real estate you own that you can't produce the Telluto diamond in twenty-four hours."

The Baron lighted a cigarette very slowly and thoughtfully.

"Signor," he said mildly, "since you have doubted my word, allow me to doubt yours. If you gave me a written paper, perhaps, saying that if I produce it within twenty-four hours it is mine, and that you will give me a hundred thousand dollars to boot, I might consider it. Naturally, I would execute whatever might be necessary to put up my possessions as bond."

"A paper saying that I'd give it to you?" Drake barked his unbelief.

"I do not expect you to accept," said the Baron placidly. "But otherwise, if I produced it, you might still have me arrested for theft."

Drake grinned.

"I'm on—providing the Countess agrees to marry me, if you fail."

"Oh, promise him, Beatrice," said the Baron, annoyed. "He begins to bore me."

The *Contesa* looked from one to the other for a long minute. Then she suddenly looked very determined.

"If Carlo loses everything he has, we could never marry, anyway," she said, resolute, but frightened. "I promise."

Drake, on the instant, had a fountain pen out. He scribbled for a matter of minutes, then handed the sheet to the Baron, who read it very carefully indeed. In the meantime, Drake was writing another. The Baron read that and smilingly signed it. Drake scribbled his signature.

"Witness it, Beatrice, please," said the Baron mildly.

HE PICKED up the papers, glanced over them again, and stuffed them into his inside pocket. Then he casually reached into his vest pocket and tossed the Telluto diamond on the table.

It lay there, sparkling vividly, throwing out little crisp flames of rosy light. It was amazingly beautiful and amazingly alive, but Drake stared at it as if it were a serpent.

"It can't be so!" he cried hysterically. "It can't! It can't!"

He snatched for it, and the Baron's hand caught his wrist in a suddenly steel-like grip.

"No, signor," he said mildly. "It is mine now."

Drake clawed in his pockets and dragged out a green cable form. He read it with wide, aghast, unbelieving eyes, staring from it to the glittering stone on the table.

"Ah, that!" said the Baron. "When we made our bet, signor, I wrote a letter. It was to my bankers, and it told them of the bet. And I instructed them that if I cabled them for money from any place whatever, they were to cable you that the diamond had been found in Italy. I cabled them yesterday, and they cabled you to-day, and you just tried to take away my poor remaining possessions by betting upon what you thought was a sure thing. It seems to me," said the Baron severely, "that it was not very ethical."

HE DROPPED the diamond into his pocket.

"Beatrice, had we not better go? We must find a priest and a marriage license and a hotel, and all in a very few hours. We will go back to Venice for our honeymoon?"

Drake was still dazed, still disgruntled.

"By God! You shan't get away with it! Give me back that diamond or I'll have you arrested for stealing it!"

"I have, signor," the Baron reminded him with exquisite courtesy, "your agreement to give it to me. And I may add that you will be liable to prosecution for smuggling if you claim it. I did not bring the diamond secretly through the customs, signor. You did."

"I did? It's a lie!"

The Baron's lips tensed.

"I am not accustomed to being called names," he said gently. "But I am still your guest. I would remind you, signor, that you are the possessor of the Squilanti plate, a masterpiece of Benvenuto Cellini. And Cellini, in his autobiography, speaks of making that plate and of contriving a secret hiding-place within one of the figures. Every one knows of that. I merely pretended to put the diamond back into its case when you showed it to me, and instead kept it in my hand until I came to the Cellini plate. Then, while admiring that, I put the diamond within. I extracted it at dinner last evening, when, for the first time, you caused the plate to be used as a part of your table service."

He paused to smile at the *Contesa*.

"I need not say, signor," he added with delicate irony, "that a collector of your fame would not be believed if he said he was ignorant of that hiding-place, when every volume of Cellini's memoirs describes it in detail. And certainly, if one were to describe the minuteness of your search for the diamond, the overlooking of that hiding-place would seem purposeful—to avoid

the customs services, both of Italy and America."

HE OFFERED the *Contesa* his arm.

"Come, Beatrice, let us go," he said sedately.

With a little gasp of accumulated relief, she clung fast. She seemed to breathe more freely when they were clear of the house.

"I think," said the Baron mildly, "that I shall have it set into a ring for you, Beatrice. I had planned something of the sort. We shall have a few hundred thousand *lire* to start our married life upon, in any event, and when that is gone . . ."

"I shall not worry," said the *Contesa*, letting him draw her a little closer as the cab sped down toward the consulate, and thence to the City Hall and other still more attractive moments. "I shall never worry again, Carlo. I worried this time, but then, I did not know how clever you are."

The baron kissed her.

"But cleverness," he said with a fine air of melancholy—"ah, it is a snare and a delusion! It first made me poor, and now it is making me married!"

But his smile was very far from melancholy as he looked at her.

TELL US WHY

You're so fond of MYSTERY STORIES. Or, if you're not, tell us *why not*.

Put your opinion into writing and send it in to us at once.

Your criticisms of our stories, covers and illustrations are of great value to us in determining what should go into the magazine.

For every letter printed the publishers of MYSTERY STORIES will pay two dollars to the writer.

How Aix-La-Chapelle Was Founded

By ARTHUR F. HARRIS

DURING the early days of his reign Charlemagne, the mighty king of the Franks (reigned 768-814), once held his court in Zurich.

On the bank of the lake near his residence, so the story goes, a bell was mounted on a column. Whoever had a request to make of the Emperor had only to toll the bell, whereupon Charlemagne would appear and listen to any complaint or request.

One day the bell tolled apparently without human agency, and did it again the next day. A servant was set to watch on the third day, and saw a serpent come and pull the bell-rope. The Emperor, being informed, went at once to the spot, saying: "Be it man or beast, I will have justice to anyone who asks it."

The serpent led him to its grotto in the bank, where the entrance was found to be blocked by an enormous toad. The toad was immediately slain.

Next day the serpent came into the banqueting hall just as the Emperor and his retinue were about to sit down to dinner and, after bowing thrice to those present, it crawled up on the table and dropped a magnificent jewel in one of the wine-cups.

Charlemagne gave the jewel to his Empress, who presently discovered that it possessed the property of obtaining the Imperial favor for anyone who wore it. Charlemagne now became so attached to his wife that he never wanted her to leave his side. But after a few years, she died.

In her last illness, fearing that some unworthy person might get possession of the jewel, she hid it under her tongue. The Emperor's idolatry of his wife continued even yet, for he had her body embalmed and carried with him on all of his travels.

But Archbishop Turpin, his spiritual adviser, suspected something supernatural about this attachment and, searching the wife's body, he discovered the jewel and appropriated it for himself.

Thereupon the Emperor's regard was transferred to Turpin, who finally became so bored by it that one day, while they were in western Germany, he threw the jewel into a pool.

Charlemagne, still unconscious of the strange spell, now became so attached to the spot where the jewel lay hidden that he resolved to build a city there and live there. And thus was founded Aix-la-Chapelle.

The high medicinal virtues of the mineral springs there used to be attributed to that magic jewel lying under the waters.

Harrison had worked himself nearly to the water's edge.

When Conscience Stings

By WALTER W. LIGGETT

The lure of gold has put strange kinks into the minds of men. Harrison's diabolical plan was almost perfect, but at the psychological moment Calthorpe remembered an old sourdough's tale— and you'll never guess how he applied it.

"SO YOU won't tell where you cached the gold?"

The other man shook his head. Hands strapped behind his back, feet lashed together, he was propped against a flat-bottomed boat drawn half-way out of the water on the river bank. One of his cheeks was bruised and occasionally he licked away a tiny crimson rivulet that trickled from his mouth.

"I suppose I've got to do time for this, anyway," he said, "but it will be easier if I know there's a stake waiting for me when I get out." His bloody lips twisted into a grin. Small, alert, shifty-eyed, his sharp features, despite their tan, unmistakably marked him as a city dweller. For all his helplessness, there was a strange confidence in his manner as he scanned the other with amused contempt.

The kneeling man stirred the bacon in the frying-pan he held over the fire. Tall, broad, bearded, nearly twice the size of the other, something about his grave, brown eyes and quiet, massive dignity was suggestive of a great St. Bernard dog. A flannel shirt, open at the throat, exposed his hairy chest, and corduroy trousers were thrust into laced boots. A battered felt hat, shoved well back from his brow, revealed

a blood-stained bandage about his head. Now he raised his eyes and regarded the other thoughtfully.

"I wonder if you'd tell if I held this hot pan against your bare foot for a while." His deep tones were low, impersonal, almost gentle. He seemed musing to himself rather than talking to the other.

"Try it and you'll join me in jail," the bound man jeered. "For a trick like that, any judge in Canada would hand you a longer sentence than I'm likely to get."

"You may be right," the big man assented. "As a lawyer, you ought to know. Yes, I suppose the judge at Dawson might object if I tortured a confession out of you."

"You're going to take me to Dawson, then?"

"White Horse is nearer, but Dawson is downstream. It'll be easier rowing. We'll get there sooner, too, and I can't say that I enjoy your society as much as I did."

"I stopped enjoying yours some time ago," the bound man retorted.

THE big man finished frying the bacon, took a teapot off the live coals near the edge of the fire, and, sitting back on his haunches, began meditatively to munch his food. The bound man watched him in silence for a few moments. Then he grinned.

"Trying to starve me out, eh?"

It was the big man's turn to smile. "I refuse to answer on the ground that I may incriminate myself. That's the legal phrase, isn't it?" He went on eating.

"This won't get you anything," the other snarled. "We'll be in Dawson in seven days at the most. I can go without grub that long if I have to. I've done it before."

"When you were practising law?"

The bound man muttered some profane rejoinder.

"You may not get to Dawson in seven days." The big man smiled again as he refilled his mug with tea.

"Meaning what?"

The big man tapped his revolver holster. "You acted outside the law. Why shouldn't I? You said you had it figured out that nobody would ever find out that you killed me—that you could give it as an accident. Why can't I do the same thing—if you disappear?"

"You can."

"Why shouldn't you disappear, then?"

The bound man laughed. "My secret—the secret of where your gold is cached—would disappear with me."

"You say you won't tell, anyway?"

"I won't."

"Then why shouldn't I kill you now?"

"So long as I'm alive, you'll always nurse the hope that some day I'll weaken and tell. Kill me and you kill that hope. No, I don't think I'm running much risk, Mr. Calthorpe. You'll guard me mighty carefully on this trip to Dawson." Once more he grinned impudently. "And the Canadian government will take good care of me after that—for a few years. But it won't be so bad. I'll have a nice steam-heated cell while you're freezing in this God-forsaken country, looking for more gold."

"You'll have to work in prison."

"It won't be as hard as this mucking we've been doing. And there'll be as much grub, and better cooked. No, I won't mind it as much as you think, Calthorpe. And when I get out I'll be a rich man. I'll still be young. I can change my

name—go to Europe or some other place where I'm not known—and live on Easy Street the rest of my life. It's something to look forward to. I'll enjoy myself more in prison than you will outside."

"SUPPOSE I don't take you back to Dawson—and make you tell where that gold is hidden?" For the first time a menacing hardness crept into Calthorpe's voice. "That might knock your plans into a cocked hat, eh, Harrison?"

"It will be you who will do time if you show up at Dawson without me," Harrison laughed.

"You planned on having me disappear."

"Yes, but I have brains to plan with," Harrison sneered.

"What do you mean?"

"Do you remember that government courier who dropped into our camp two weeks ago?" Calthorpe nodded. "I gave him a letter to take to a friend of mine at Dawson."

"Well, what of that?"

"I wrote my friend that you were acting queerly, Calthorpe. I told him I thought you were *non compos mentis*—going crazy, if you understand that better—and that I was going to quit because I was afraid to stay with you any longer. If you show up without me—after that letter—there'll be questions asked."

"But if you arrived at Dawson without me, you could have explained that I'd wandered off or thrown myself into the river. Was that your scheme?"

"Exactly that." Harrison grinned complacently.

"I think you're lying about that letter." Once more Calthorpe spoke more to himself than to the other. "You didn't mention it the first time I spoke of killing you. You just invented it on the spur of the moment."

"Go ahead and kill me," Harrison sneered. "Then you'll find out whether I'm bluffing. The Mounted Police always investigate pretty thoroughly when two men go out prospecting together and only one returns. I had an alibi fixed up to account for your disappearance, but you don't dare run the risk—not after my letter. No, you've got to go to Dawson, Calthorpe, and whether the jury accepts your word and I get sent 'over the road,' or whether they believe me when I tell them you're crazy, the gold is going to be mine — some day — and there's enough of it to be worth waiting for. Besides, my story's going to be that we didn't find any gold—that you went crazy from disappointment when the claim failed to pan out. Remember, we didn't tell that courier that we'd struck it rich."

"At your suggestion," Calthorpe interjected. "H'm! I begin to see."

"Yes, at my suggestion," Harrison exulted. "I was planning my alibi even then. Maybe you will believe now that I did send that letter? Well, if we didn't find any gold, Calthorpe, what possible motive could a man my size have for attacking a giant like you? Probably the whole case will be thrown out of court—unless they shut you up in an asylum. I didn't intend to tip my hand this way, but you've forced me to. It all simmers down to your word against mine, and already I've created the suspicion that you are balmy." He laughed arrogantly. "Possession is nine points of the law and self-possession is the tenth."

"YOU are a clever devil, Harrison. It's too bad your moral sense hasn't kept pace with your brain."

"Moral sense!" Harrison sneered. "There you go again. Honestly, Calthorpe, I don't believe I'd have tried to kill you if it hadn't been for your everlasting preaching about 'moral sense.' You ought to have been a sky pilot instead of a prospector."

"I used to think I did have some talent in that line," Calthorpe gravely responded, "but when you, after five months in my company, crept up from behind and hit me over the head with an oar, I decided I was mistaken."

Harrison acknowledged the thrust with a grin. "And at the same time I found I had made a mistake when I credited you with having any brains," he retorted. "That wallop would have killed you if your head wasn't solid bone. I should have used my gun."

"You wanted to be able to account for every cartridge—and to show a revolver that hadn't been fired recently."

"You guessed it. I was thinking of my alibi and not that concrete dome of yours. I'll admit I made a mistake."

"It was a bigger mistake than you think, Harrison. When you realize——"

"Oh, cut the preaching," Harrison interrupted. "I suppose you're going to say I'll be sorry. I am—sorry that I messed the job. That's my only regret. I never lost any sleep yet through the stings of my conscience. That's all bunk. And if you practised what you're always preaching, Calthorpe, you'd give me some supper."

CALTHORPE gathered his cooking utensils, walked to the water's edge, and scoured them with sand. After he had replaced them in the grub box in the bow of the boat, he turned his back on Harrison, lighted his pipe, and stood looking across the wide, sluggish Yukon to the foothills that stretched in endless waves to the horizon.

It was August, and although it was nearly nine o'clock, the sun still topped the horizon; but its light was diffused by a wavering murkiness that seemed to rise like vapor from the hollows of the distant hills. Occasionally a fish splashed as it leaped from the river, and at intervals he heard a mournful, eerie call of a solitary loon.

Then a mosquito circled about his head. Its shrill, insistent buzz sounded like the drone of a tiny airplane motor. Calthorpe mechanically brushed it away.

Another mosquito whined irritatingly about his face—then another, and another. The stiff wind that had been blowing off the river all day was dying down as the sun sank lower and lower, and the swarming insects from the marshes were advancing like the hosts of an unnumbered army.

Calthorpe refilled his pipe. But even while he puffed out little clouds of tobacco smoke the pests circled about, alighting in quick swoops on his face, his hands, his neck.

Calthorpe looked down the river again. In the morning he would be drifting downstream with Harrison bound in the bow. Six or seven days more of unpleasant, enforced contact; then Dawson—and the trial.

He frowned. It seemed impossible that any judge could doubt his story. But if Harrison really had written that letter—his frown deepened. Insanity is proverbially common in the northland among prospectors who spend months without companionship. Calthorpe always had been of solitary habit, seldom joining the dissipations and amuse-

ments of his fellow miners. His long walks alone, and his custom of sitting brooding by a camp fire while his companions played cards, had aroused jocular comment more than once. And Harrison was gay, lively, a good mixer. Suppose Harrison's story should be believed. It would be hard to live down the suspicion. Whispers and sidelong looks would always follow Calthorpe. It would be difficult, if not impossible, for him to get another partner; and it was hazardous to prospect alone.

He was not avaricious, but it was maddening to think how this lawyer had persuaded him to take him on this prospecting trip on the plea that his health required a few months of living out of doors, and then had tricked him. And Calthorpe had liked him—trusted him. It was doubly maddening to think that if a jury believed Harrison's plausible tale, he might return later, recover the cached gold, and then leave the country to enjoy the wealth, while Calthorpe was toiling for another stake. He savagely slapped a mosquito on his cheek and spat another from between his lips. The air was thick with them. They were the curse of the Yukon. He supposed he would have to get out their mosquito masks.

HE WONDERED why Harrison had not already complained. Then he saw that the smoke from the smoldering embers of the camp fire, like a long white scarf, was veering now on one side of Harrison and now on the other. The insects had not bothered him yet.

"This is like a Quaker meeting," Harrison laughed. "Are you waiting for my conscience to sting me into confessing?"

Calthorpe's eyes narrowed. For a second he stood regarding Harrison intently. Then he, too, broke into a ringing laugh.

"What's the joke?" Harrison asked.

Calthorpe laughed again.

"I believe you *are* going crazy," Harrison snapped.

"You just reminded me of something funny—at least, I think it's funny. Probably you won't."

Calthorpe walked to the camp fire, carefully stamped out the last dying embers, and placed their packs in the boat. Then, seizing Harrison by the shoulders, he dragged him over and propped him against a big boulder further from the river bank. Thrusting the boat into the water, Calthorpe stepped into the bow and prepared to shove it out into the stream.

"Think you'll scare me by leaving me alone?" Harrison called. "The wolves won't bother me at this time of the year."

"No, Harrison, the wolves won't bother you. If I hear any, I'll come ashore."

"You're not going far, then?"

"Not far. But I think you need time and solitude for meditation, Harrison. I want you to think things over. Perhaps before the night's over your conscience——"

Harrison growled out an oath.

"I was going to say that possibly your conscience may be—well, stimulated. You said it never bothered you before. I think it will to-night. In fact, I'm willing to bet my share of the gold that you'll confess before morning."

"You *are* balmy."

"When you get ready to tell where the gold is, call and I'll come ashore." Without another word Calthorpe poled into the river for about one hundred feet and then dropped anchor. Taking a wide strip of mosquito netting out of his pack, he

draped it over his wide-brimmed hat and let it fall like a canopy to his shoulders. Lighting his pipe, he worked the stem through the mosquito bar, and, leaning back in the stern of the boat, gazed upward at the few stars that flickered in the growing murkiness.

THE humming of the mosquitoes was like a fairy symphony: low, musical, rising and falling in an irregular cadence. The sustained, insistent buzzing of the swarm of insects was audible over the soft slap of water against the boat and the soughing of the breeze in the underbrush.

Then he heard a savage oath from Harrison. Calthorpe smiled grimly as he glanced shoreward. Harrison's head was jerking from side to side as he vainly tried to brush his face against his shoulders.

"Calthorpe!" he cried. "Bring my mosquito mask!"

Calthorpe did not answer.

"Good God! Are you going to leave me here to be eaten alive?" Harrison's voice was shrill, almost hysterical.

"Will you tell me where you cached the gold?"

A torrent of profanity was the only reply. Calthorpe refilled his pipe. He saw that Harrison was no longer sitting against the rock. He had managed to throw himself sideways and was threshing about like a wounded animal, trying to brush off the insects by rubbing his face against the rocky shore.

"Calthorpe!" Harrison's voice was desperate.

"Are you ready to——"

"You can't make me confess," Harrison shrilled. "I've stood worse than this. I'll never——"

"Better not make rash promises, Harrison. Never is a long time."

"Do you think a few mosquito bites can——"

"Did you ever know, Harrison, that before gold was found up here, when the Indians wanted to make some one confess a crime, they'd strip him and stake him out beside the river all night and let the mosquitoes work on him. An old sourdough told me about it, Harrison.

"He said he'd seen an Indian who had been through the experience. He had gone crazy, and so they hadn't killed him. You know Indians think any one who is crazy is under the protection of their Totems. But the Indian confessed before he went crazy. The old sourdough told me they always did.

"The first few stings aren't so bad, Harrison. But when they sting you hour after hour—always buzzing about before they sting—and the accumulated poison gets into your blood—well, they say it's torture—maddening torture. But you'll know more about it than I do before morning.

"I shouldn't be surprised if they lock you up in an asylum instead of the penitentiary, Harrison, when I finally get you to Dawson. And I've been thinking that letter you said you wrote won't be such a good alibi as you suppose. Didn't you know, Harrison, that one of the first symptoms of insanity is to accuse every one around you of being insane?" He laughed as he heard a choked oath from Harrison.

"Now listen to the story I'm going to tell, Harrison—when we get to Dawson. I'm going to say that you went insane and strayed away from camp. That I finally found you wandering along the shore, half-eaten by mosquitoes; and that you were so violent that I had to tie you up.

"I wonder which of us the Mount-

ed Police are most likely to believe when we get to Dawson—after the mosquitoes get through with you.

"The stings of conscience, eh, Harrison? I'm glad you said that. That was what reminded me of what that old sourdough had told me. I mightn't have thought of it otherwise."

"I'll never tell—never—never—*never!*" Harrison screamed. "I'll bite my tongue off first. I'll——"

"Think it over. Think it over," Calthorpe boomed back. "You've plenty of time. And don't lose that self-possession you were bragging about."

"You——" Harrison's last words were muffled as he frantically twisted his head on the rough ground.

"Take it easy," Calthorpe counseled ironically. A few minutes later Calthorpe began singing in a deep, melodious baritone.

NOW and then Calthorpe heard a muffled groan as Harrison writhed on the shore, but he did not call out again. Leaning back in the stern, lulled by the lapping of the river against the boat, Calthorpe closed his eyes, but continued to sing snatches of all the old songs he could remember.

"Calthorpe! Calthorpe! For God's sake, Calthorpe!"

Calthorpe started up so abruptly that he came perilously near upsetting the boat.

"Calthorpe! Bring that mosquito net. I'll tell where the dust is."

Pulling up his anchor, Calthorpe sculled ashore. Harrison had worked himself nearly to the water's edge. His eyes were almost closed, a score of mosquitoes were fastened on his bruised and bleeding face, and a swarm of them were hovering over him.

"Where's the dust, Harrison?"

"In a chuck hole under that old dead tree—up the shore about fifty feet. For God's sake, give me the mask first!" Harrison sobbed.

Disregarding Harrison's plea, Calthorpe went to the tree, found the hole under its roots, and, plunging his arm inside, fumbled around and drew out the six heavy pokes of gold dust. He could hear Harrison's sobs.

AFTER carrying back the gold and putting it in the boat, he turned his attention to Harrison. First he rebuilt the fire. Then he opened the grub box, sliced some bacon, and put it in the frying-pan. He laved Harrison's face with the lukewarm bacon grease and powdered it thickly with baking soda. Then he tied the mosquito netting about his face and unbound his hands.

"We'll start for Dawson in the morning," Calthorpe announced. "I'm going to untie you just before we get there"—Harrison looked up with a start of surprise—"and give you half the gold—your fair share.

"I'm not going to say anything to the police either, Harrison. I guess I can afford to call it quits if you can. Only, don't ever go prospecting again. I'd feel duty bound to warn any man that might take you for a partner. You'd better go back to law. It's more in keeping with your talents—and temperament."

"What time is it?" Harrison asked, raising his puffed face.

"Eleven-thirty."

"Good God!" Harrison cried, suddenly breaking into tears. "I thought it was almost morning."

"You would have had the gold if you'd had the guts to hold out till midnight," Calthorpe laughed.

"What do you mean?" Harrison

demanded, staring at him incredulously.

Calthorpe gestured toward the river.

"There's a boat comin' the old *Yukoner*, I guess. I saw her smoke coming out of Lake Le Barge when I first rowed out on the river. And I could see the sparks from her stacks when you hollered 'Enough.' Could hear her, too. That's why I started singing—so you wouldn't hear her coming.

"I took a chance, Harrison—a big chance it looked like. But I was gambling that you couldn't stand the gaff very long. A crook seldom can." Calthorpe laughed again.

"I don't believe you!" Harrison screamed. "I——"

"Listen," Calthorpe commanded.

ABOVE the slow murmur of the river and the faint, insistent humming of the myriads of mosquitoes, Harrison, listening intently, could hear the unmistakable chug-chug-chug of a side-wheel river steamer as it battled upstream against the sweep of the turgid Yukon. And the next instant it rounded the nearest bend in the river and its searchlight swept the little camp like an accusing eye.

"You'll pay for this," Harrison blustered.

"Shall I hail her?" Calthorpe challenged, striding to the bank. "Say the word and I will. And then you can tell your story and I'll tell mine. But it will mean a police investigation. Doubtless there's a Mountie or two aboard her. And it might mean disbarment for you. Shall I call them in?"

Harrison sullenly shook his head. Calthorpe walked back and squatted by the camp-fire. He refilled his pipe, lighted it, took a few puffs, then spoke again.

"I guess you were right a while ago, Harrison," he jeered. "That time when you said possession was nine points of the law—and self-possession the tenth."

But Harrison did not answer. With a steady chug-chug-chug the river steamboat slowly moved past them on its way upstream, and about their heads the mosquitoes circled insistently, droning like tiny airplanes.

The Most Mysterious Happening of My Life

Each month MYSTERY STORIES will print letters of five hundred words or less, telling of the strange experiences of our readers.

These experiences need not be of the occult type, but they must have a strong element of mystery, and their truthfulness must be vouched for by the authors.

For each letter published we will send the writer five dollars.

Your story should preferably be typewritten on one side of the paper.

A Ghostly Visitant

By JOHN MILLER GREGORY

SEVERAL years ago my wife's sister died, and Mrs. Gregory's niece, Dorothy, came to live with us. Perhaps the girl's natural despondency under the circumstances may account for part of the mysterious happenings that followed.

One morning at breakfast she asked my wife: "What were you doing in my room last night?"

Mrs. Gregory, who greatly resembles her dead sister, denied that she had been there.

"Oh, but I know you were," insisted Dorothy good-naturedly. "I awakened suddenly to find you standing by the mantel. I asked you what you wanted, but you crossed the room and went out without replying."

Mrs. Gregory smiled at me, and I

dismissed the matter with a laconic "Shadow." But Dorothy denied my easy settlement of the question, and insisted that she had seen her aunt in her room the night before.

Several nights later I came wide awake in the middle of the night. My window was open and my attention was attracted by the swaying of the curtains. Suddenly from behind one of them glided the misty shade of a woman clothed in a flowing white robe. She came over to my bed and stood there for several moments. I lifted myself on my elbow and asked:

"What do you want?"

She bent down her head, and I saw that she was the image of my wife, who was sleeping in her twin bed at my side. I received no answer, and gradually the apparition disappeared.

The following night it came again, but the only reply to my words, "Who are you?" was a smile and the disappearance of the vision.

Some months later we moved into a new house, on the top floor of which I arranged a work-room containing a bookcase, a table, several chairs, and a couch.

One night Dorothy slept there. In the middle of the night she was awakened by the opening of the door.

Thinking a draft had caused it to open, she rose and closed it, rattling the door to see if the lock had fastened. But on her return to bed the door opened again, swinging back to the wall. Thoroughly frightened, Dorothy again closed the door, but once more it came open. This time she let it stay; she buried her head in the bedclothes and went to sleep.

When she related this story, I examined the lock carefully. It caught perfectly. But that morning while I was working the door suddenly opened. I closed it, but again it opened. I then went through the house, but there were no drafts. Again I closed the door, saw that the lock was securely caught, and went back to work. In less than five minutes the door swung open again.

It has done so frequently since, and so far I have been unable to account for it. Dorothy is no longer with us, and whether or not this new manifestation is a heritage from the former owner of our house I cannot say. I merely know that often my door opens apparently without reason, and I have grown rather accustomed to feeling that when it does so some one is looking over my shoulder as I write.

The Mystery Club

A DEPARTMENT

THE name on the engraved card was "Everard Jason," and our caller was himself an impressive figure—tall and dark, with fine eyes and a countenance of great keenness, and every elegance of dress and manner. However, a silver band on his walking-stick had the monogram "J. E. G." In his hat we observed the single initial X; while a subsequent display of his handkerchief revealed the embroidered initials "E. J. Z." Decidedly a man of mystery, this urbane stranger who had telephoned asking for an appointment at precisely 3:33 P. M. on Friday.

He said at once that he was a devoted reader of MYSTERY STORIES, which seemed to entitle him to our editorial consideration. And he added: "We have also this in common—I am the acting head of the Mystery Club."

As we disliked admitting we had never heard of his organization, there followed a rather awkward pause.

"Indeed?" we said at last, after carefully weighing our reply.

"Yes," said he, "I am a charter member of the Mystery Club—in fact, I may say *the* Charter Member." And then he astonished us by confessing that he was thus far the Club's only member. He said he had come to invite us to join him.

"What must one do to qualify for membership?"

"Solve a mystery," said he.

"But aren't mysteries rather infrequent—genuine mysteries? Perhaps that accounts for your—ah—limited membership."

"Not at all," he replied. From his pocket he took out a small black leather notebook, and seemed to open it at random. "Here," he explained, "are a hundred authentic mysteries. I keep them arranged in problem form. Try this one. Solve it, and I promise you shall enjoy the distinguished advantages of charter membership in the Mystery Club."

He paused significantly and then began to read:

PROBLEM NUMBER ONE

THE MYSTERY OF PROFESSOR MASON

Professor G. Alexander Mason, noted

chemist, is found dead in his laboratory. He is locked in. There is no sign of intrusion. There is no known motive for murder.

It seems to be a case of suicide. For friends and associates testify that Professor Mason had seemed despondent and melancholy. Yet he declined to abandon his laboratory experiments. Shortly after the War he had suffered a severe nervous breakdown, due to his overwork as a government chemist. Professor Mason took a leading part in developing certain poison gases of great military value. But for a time his deadly contribution seemed to prey on his mind. Recently, however, it is known that he had perfected other and more terrible gases.

When discovered the professor is seated at a table, his head upon his folded arms resting on the table. A .32-caliber revolver is in his coat pocket. It is loaded, with one cartridge discharged. On his right temple there is a superficial wound which has bled a little, but it is not serious enough to cause death or even unconsciousness. The physician examining for the police reports that death was apparently due to strangulation.

A .32-caliber bullet — evidently the one which the professor himself fired, and which caused the temple wound—is found imbedded in the laboratory wall, above a shelf upon which there are various flagons, bottles, beakers, and retorts. The shattered fragments of two of these glass vessels indicate the bullet's course.

Professor Mason attempted suicide, but failed to shoot himself fatally. Yet he is dead. The revolver, remember, was found in his pocket. Would the police be justified in claiming that the professor was murdered in some mysterious way, with the murderer cleverly giving this semblance of suicide to his accomplished crime?

EVERARD JASON put the final question hopefully. Despite his superior air, his exclusive manner and appearance, he was disposed to welcome new members into his Club, we surmised.

"What do you say to Number One?" he queried.

"Professor Mason was not murdered," we ventured.

"Excellent! Proceed!" he exclaimed. "You are as good as elected right now."

"The professor," we pursued cautiously, "tried to shoot himself. He failed. No doubt his nervous condition made his hand unsteady. But Professor Mason was not lacking in nerve. This bullet, he saw, had shattered a vessel on that shelf, which contained one of his new gases. The death he desired was ironically forced upon him. He put the revolver back into his pocket, folded his arms, bowed his head upon them, and awaited the inevitable end in the locked laboratory. A brave man, unfortunately the victim of his own brain—of its unbalanced, suicidal impulse and of its subtle creation, the new and very deadly gas."

"Bravo!" cried our singular clubman. "You are in. Try this one and you can be vice-president."

But we protested. We urged him to let us publish a series of his ingenious Mystery Problems for our readers to solve. And he heartily consented.

"They will love it," he assured us. "And if you thus enable me to build up the Mystery Club, I promise you I shall keep it alive. Try it as a department in your magazine. In time there will be all sorts of interesting things for the Club to undertake. Let's begin with Problem Number Two."

Here it is:

PROBLEM NUMBER TWO

THE MYSTERY OF THE AMBUSH

G is a vicious gangster of considerable cunning. On a lonely suburban roadside he is lying in wait for T, his enemy and rival, whom he means to shoot from ambush. G has no scruples. He is blindly determined to exterminate T, an alleged "squealer."

He sees his foe approaching. The moment of his vengeance is near. But suddenly G sees B, also a denizen of the underworld, step out into the road and hail the oncoming T. The two criminals converse while the third, G, watches, waits, and wonders. Is B warning T? But that can hardly be the case, since B is wanted by the police and has been thought to have gone to Canada. B has been out of sight for weeks. But now B suddenly draws a revolver and shoots T. G sees his own intended victim slain without his having fired a shot.

However, G, in his ambush, thinks quickly. His hatred of T vanishes now that T is dead. He thinks only of himself and his possible involvement in the murder.

The killer, B, believed throughout the un-

derworld to have gone into hiding in Canada, must have planned this murder of T very carefully. He will have framed an alibi. Probably the police will never suspect him, and he will slip away to "lie low" again in the North.

Now G realizes that suspicion will rest upon him. All the underworld, the stool pigeons, the detectives at headquarters, know he had a motive for killing T. And here he is at the scene of the crime. He will have no genuine alibi.

His murder lust spent, he sees himself a trapped fool. If his bullet had finished T, he would have had but a slim chance of escaping the consequences. And now, though B did the shooting, his chance is not at all improved.

There is T dead, and B is about to make his getaway.

B fired a revolver. G has a rifle, which he has not fired. G is desperate and crafty, with his own getaway in doubt. He has only an instant in which to decide what he must do to save himself. He makes at least three prompt moves. What do you say they are?

THE Man of Mystery will publish his answer to this Problem in the January issue of MYSTERY STORIES.

Our readers are invited to solve this Problem No. 2, giving their version of the conduct of the desperate, resourceful criminal, G. Answers should not exceed one hundred and fifty words, and must be received not later than November 5, 1927. They should be addressed to the Mystery Club, care of MYSTERY STORIES, 52 Vanderbilt Avenue, New York, N. Y. No manuscripts can be returned.

The three answers that in the judgment of the editors are the best and most cleverly worked out will be published in the January issue of MYSTERY STORIES. These answers do not need to conform with the answer of the "Man of Mystery." To each of the writers of these three answers the publishers of this magazine will send a book selected by the winner from the list given below:

THE ASTOUNDING CRIME ON TORRINGTON ROAD, by William Gillette (*Harper & Brothers*).

THE CANARY MURDER CASE, by S. S. Van Dine (*Charles Scribner's Sons*).

CASTLE ROCK MYSTERY, by George Gibbs (*D. Appleton & Co.*).

SINISTER HOUSE, by Charles G. Booth (*William Morrow & Co., Inc.*).

THE DEVIL OF PEI-LING, by Herbert Asbury (*Macy-Masius*).

THE OCTOPUS OF PARIS, by Gaston Leroux (*The Macaulay Co.*).

THE SILVER URN, by Foxhall Daingerfield (*Appleton & Co.*).

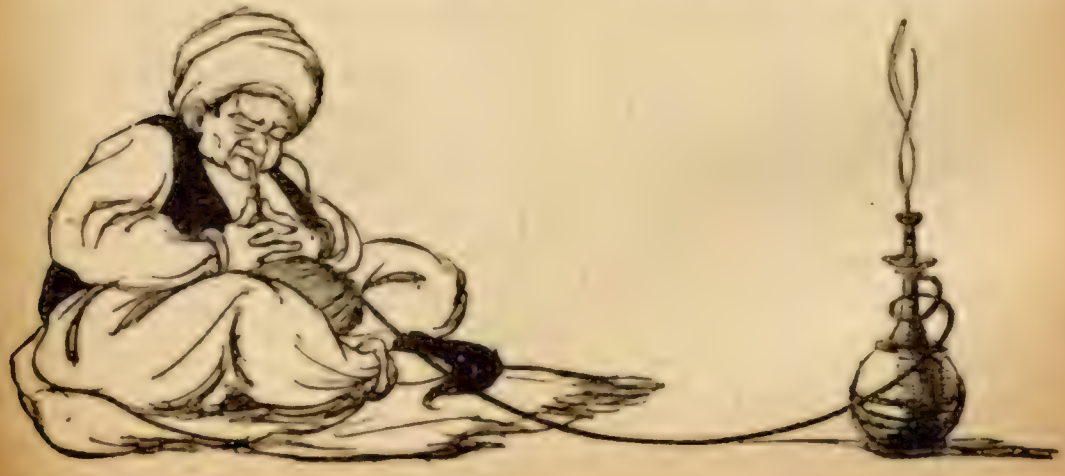
TERROR KEEP, by Edgar Wallace (*Doubleday, Page & Co.*).

VENETIAN KEY, by Allen Upward (*J. B. Lippincott Co.*).

VIVANTI, by Sidney Horler (*George H. Doran Co.*).

THE WHISPERING CHORUS, by Perley Poore Sheehan (*G. H. Watt*).

THE TECHNIQUE OF THE MYSTERY STORY, by Carolyn Wells (*The Home Correspondence School*).



We Tell Our Readers

NOW that you've read the stories in this issue, how do you like our new policy? Many of you have asked us for more real mystery stories with lots of action, and we've set out to give them to you. We think you know what you want—and, what's more, we really believe we've given it to you.

We'd like you to write in and tell us which of the stories you like best, and what's the matter with those that don't appeal to you. Beginning with the January number we'll run, opposite this page, a department bearing the name: *OUR READERS TELL US*. On our page we'll tell you something about our authors, and on your page you'll tell us what you think of our magazine.

We'll print the best of your letters that are under five hundred words in length, and for each letter printed we offer two dollars. And here's a little secret between you and us: A neat, preferably typewritten and double-spaced letter with an interesting message for all our readers will get first consideration.

Would you ever guess from the fascinating blood-and-thunder of LONG SHADOWS that Katharine Haviland Taylor is—she told us herself—most fond of working in her garden and of keeping house, and that she prefers the quiet in which she can work best? We always had a notion that her favorite occupation was snooping around, opening doors suddenly and creaking shutters mysteriously. She's done a lot of traveling—perhaps that's how she picked up her thrilling mystery plots. In the ten years that she's been writing she's turned out more than a book a year, and heaps of short stories and poems which have made her famous.

Raymond Scudder, who wrote our feature story, was born in Tokyo, Japan, of American parents, in 1900. After a period in the U. S. army and a brief venture into collegiate life (both on American soil), he traveled four years in vagabondage, working his way to the Orient and westward around the world. He spent four months as special correspondent in Shanghai, and there he absorbed the local color that makes THE SHANGHAI BETRAYAL so vivid and enjoyable.

Alvin F. Harlow came honestly by his interest in the great unsolved mysteries of history, for he was born while the James Brothers, Jessie and Frank, were still rampant in his native Missouri, and, says he, "I grew up under the influence of their teachings." But his interests lie in other directions, too. He has written fiction and articles for most of the leading magazines, and he's built up a truly enviable reputation in the literary world.

Richard Wilmer Rowan was an undergraduate when the war came in 1914. But even at that time he had achieved a deep interest in spies, counter-espionage and European diplomatic intrigue, which has continued unimpaired up to the present time despite his manifold outside interests. He's considered a real authority on Espionage by those who know, and early in 1928 he's publishing a book on that subject. He's had some attractive stage and cinema offers for his spy stuff—but, he assures us: "When writing I still keep my fingers crossed."

How did you like our real Western? Paul Sand, the author of RAWHIDE REESE, developed his interest in mystery early in life. "I had none of the common desire to become a policeman," he says. "I was the incarnation of no less a personage than Sherlock Holmes. Wasn't I lean and lanky? Wasn't I counted brilliant by my teachers? Didn't I have a Sherlockian nose? It was no trouble at all to fill this rôle to the satisfaction of my imagination."

The White Mountains, selected as a setting for Warren Ordway's story, have always been one of his favorite recreation grounds. He has climbed most of the

important mountains, fished in many of the best streams—no wonder he knows how a basket of fish should be packed!—and tramped through the woods and notches, both in summer and winter. You can tell from his story that he's thoroughly at home there, can't you?

Leslie McFarlane is out to tell the world about Montreal—the locale of his yarn. He writes plaintively: "It has always seemed to me that Montreal has been woefully neglected by fictionists; in my opinion it is one of the most colorful cities imaginable. I'm going to try to write more of it."

"I'm probably the largest writer—physically—allowed to roam at large," Walter W. Liggett identifies himself. Are there any other contestants to the honor? Mr. Liggett stands six feet four and weighs two hundred and thirty pounds, and—"several boxing experts have suggested that I should become a pugilist instead of a writer. However, writing about fights instead of fighting is much easier on the eyes."

Murray Leinster is a young Southerner who makes his home with his wife and two little children in Virginia. He started writing when he was more or less knee-high to a grasshopper, and he's had over four hundred stories published.

This should interest our girl readers: Louise Platt Hauck writes, "I am still married to my first husband. I have three children and emphatically do not find them a hindrance to a professional career. . . . I'm so glad I'm a writer that, like the old lady in the song, 'I wouldn't thank King George to be my brother!' "

And now let's hear what you have to say!

THE EDITOR.

READ

MYSTERY STORIES

for the most interesting stories of

Mystery
Detective
Occult
Adventure

On the news-stands the fifteenth of every month.

Price 25c.

Anyone CAN LEARN!
No talent or experience necessary. Fascinating work. People crazy for signs. Complete instruction book FREE.
ABOVE: Alphabets, Colors, HOW TO MIX PAINTS, Show Cards, Window Board and Wall Signs, Neatly made letters, Gilding, TRICKS OF THE TRADE, also
gives 100 Alphabets and Designs. Book bound in flexible just leather, gold edges, and four full lettering Show Card
Pens. Book and Pens sent prepaid for $3.00. (C. O. D. 10c extra.)
OzarkPub.Co., 87 Rose St., Dept. 69, New York
SIGNS
Show Cards
3.00
EARN MONEY IMMEDIATELY—
WE FURNISH EQUIPMENT TO START

How To Work Wonders With Your

SUBCONSCIOUS MIND

DAVID V. BUSH

Give me just 60 minutes and I'll unlock the flood-gates of that vast reservoir of mental power—your Subconscious Mind. Note the immediate effect on your business, social and everyday life.

By DAVID V. BUSH

A vast reservoir of mental energy! A huge storehouse of brain power! That's the Subconscious Mind. You've got it. Your friends have it. Everyone has it. But not one in a thousand knows how to use it.

In 60 minutes I can show you exactly how to awaken your Subconscious Mind—how to harness it—how to make it work for you—how to make it solve problems—how to make it remember things—how to use its vast creative powers to boost your success and double your money-making ability.

In my book, "Functions of the Subconscious Mind," I tell just what the Subconscious Mind is—just how to reach it—just how to control it—just how to get the most out of it. It's simple as A. B. C.

ONLY 50 CENTS

Write to-day for this amazing book of more than 100 pages, "Functions of the Subconscious Mind." Send only 50 cents in full payment. If you are not delighted, return the book within 5 days and your money will be instantly refunded.

DAVID V. BUSH, Publisher, 225 N. Michigan Blvd. Dept. T-12910, CHICAGO, ILL.

TEN MAGAZINES for 10¢

10¢ NOW

The smartest, most interesting, entertaining and instructive Magazine in America! *10 weeks for only 10c.* Special introductory offer. No magazine like it. Full of important facts, pictures and the best, most popular fiction. For all members of the family. Send name, address and 10c immediately!

THE PATHFINDER, Dept. E-273 Washington, D. C.

I'll Give You BULLDOG COURAGE In 48 Hours

—OR NO COST!

DAVID V. BUSH

Are you timid? Bashful? Self-conscious? Afraid of people?—afraid of superiors? Give me 48 hours and I'll make you bristle with bulldog courage—or no cost.

Thousands of men and women are being held back—made miserable — made unhappy. Why? Simply because of bashfulness — self-consciousness — fear of criticism—business worries—and dozens of other fears.

Yet fear is ABSOLUTELY UNNECESSARY. I have discovered an amazing method which banishes fear forever! No trouble! No inconvenience. No long waiting for results. My method is perfectly simple—perfectly natural—perfectly logical. It works almost instantly. Try it. You will be astonished! In just a few hours you will find yourself brimming over with splendid new courage — new daring — new self-confidence.

Only 50 Cents

Dr. Bush gives you his secrets of real, he-man courage in his book called "Spunk." It is one of the most startling books ever written. You can't read it without a quickening of your pulse —without a surge of red-blooded courage.

This book is declared to be the masterpiece of Dr. Bush, who has astounded throngs in America's greatest cities and shown thousands the one way to health, prosperity and self-confidence. Write for this amazing book today. Send only 50 cents in full payment. If you are not delighted, return the book within 5 days and your money will be instantly refunded.

DAVID V. BUSH, PUBLISHER

825 N. Michigan Blvd. Dept. K-12910, Chicago, Ill.

BUST DEVELOPED

My Big Three Part Treatment is the ONLY ONE that gives FULL DEVELOPMENT without bathing, exercises, pumps or other dangerous absurdities. I send you a GUARANTEED TWO DOLLAR 14-DAY TREATMENT FREE

If you send a DIME toward expenses. (A Large Aluminum Box of my Wonder Cream included.) Plain wrapper. IS IT WORTH 10c TO YOU? If not, your dime back by first mail. Address NOW, with ten cents only

Madame G. M. Williams, Buffalo, N.Y.

Tobacco Habit BANISHED

Let Us Help You

No craving for tobacco in any form after you begin taking Tobacco Redeemer. Don't try to quit the tobacco habit unaided. It's often a losing fight against heavy odds and may mean a serious shock to the nervous system. Let us help the tobacco habit to quit YOU. It will quit you, if you will just take Tobacco Redeemer according to directions. It is marvelously quick and thoroughly reliable.

Not a Substitute

Tobacco Redeemer contains no habit-forming drugs of any kind. It is in no sense a substitute for tobacco. After finishing the treatment you have absolutely no desire to use tobacco again or to continue the use of the remedy. It makes not a particle of difference how long you have been using tobacco, how much you use or in what form you use it—whether you smoke cigars, cigarettes, pipe, chew plug or fine cut or use snuff, Tobacco Redeemer will positively remove all craving for tobacco in any form in a few days. This we absolutely guarantee in every case or money refunded.

Write today for our free booklet showing the deadly effect of tobacco upon the human system and positive proof that Tobacco Redeemer will quickly free you of the habit.

Newell Pharmacal Company,
Dept. 829, Clayton Station, St. Louis, Mo.

HAVE YOU JOINED THE MYSTERY CLUB?

No dues or initiation fees. Interesting prizes to those who fulfill the requirements.

FOR DETAILS REGARDING THIS DEPARTMENT

SEE PAGE 283

If you're anxious to earn big money—here's your biggest opportunity for success

Carlton's Completeness of Line Guarantees You a Season of Big Profit

Carlton
Superiority, Quality
FIFTH AVE. NEW YORK

DRESS SHIRTS
SPORT SHIRTS
WORK SHIRTS
FLANNEL SHIRTS
LUMBERJACKS
NECKWEAR
DRESS MUFFLERS
Fall and Winter Weight
UNDERWEAR
PAJAMAS
!

Just Added **Neckwear** *and Fall and Winter* **Underwear**

THE Carlton Sales Outfit pictured above, is "Worth Its Weight in Gold" . . . . these few words come nearest to describing a line that can actually pre-assure your success with it!

Featured within its covers — ready for Fall and Winter, is the most complete, and as facts prove, the easiest to sell Men's Wear Line in America.

Nine major business winning departments all closely related — irresistible values — count them!

. . . Backed by the one name — "CARLTON" — everywhere renowned for quality, respected for fair dealing and responsible for the tremendous earning power of its representatives.

No Experience Necessary — **No Capital Required**

Through you, we reach an American market of 35,000,000 prospects. Ever new — never exhaustible! . . . . All you have to do is show our Sample Book — quote our low prices and take orders without effort. We deliver, collect and guarantee satisfaction.

You are paid in cash daily. To those who are ambitious, we pay besides their big earnings, extra cash bonuses, and a 40% share in profits.

If you prefer, begin by devoting spare time — your earnings will soon justify full time to this big money making proposition.

Complete Outfit FREE

Put it in Your Pocket and Put $100.00 a Week in with it!

Upon receipt by us of special coupon to the right you will be promptly furnished with complete sample outfit — prices — order books, supplies and valuable selling helps.

The Carlton Outfit is by far the most elaborate selling kit in the field, and contains hundreds of beautifully mounted, large-size swatches of the actual merchandise. No wonder Carlton Representatives meet with immediate success. . . . The book itself does the selling, while you do the order writing . . . and plenty of it!

Act Now . . . . . via Coupon below

There is no time like "at once" when an opportunity such as this one presents itself to you. Fill in and mail the coupon — your outfit will go forward by return post — prepaid. In less than a week you will shake hands thankfully with the hand that wrote the coupon.

DISTRICT MANAGERS: The completeness of the Carlton Line guarantees successful district manager control — line up while desirable territories are still open for assignment. Write to-day to C. E. Mandel, President.

Biggest Commissions

25% Actually the commissions plus bonuses exceed 25%. Commissions are paid to you in advance. Carlton's Superiority, Variety and Completeness of Line enable you to run this 25% up to real big money. You have unlimited earning power. Make the most of it!

Bonuses in Addition

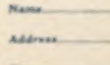
Bonuses too! Carltonians are given extra rewards with regularity paid bonuses in units up to $500.00. Your daily earnings are thereby given a real boost. Full details of the liberal Cash Bonus Plan are outlined in your sales outfit.

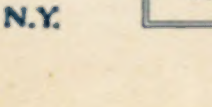
40% Profit Sharing

Paid in addition to your commissions and in addition to your bonuses. The most amazing and far-reaching move in the Direct Selling Field. Explained in "Earn Big Money" that goes with outfit.

FREE: TRANSPORTATION AND FREE COLLAR

It costs us $100,000 a year to prepay order shipments. But it is a saving to your customers! The latter is an additional sales feature with shirts priced from $2.95. . . Collars are worth from 50c to $1.00.





Dept. 334-S

C. E. MANDEL, President
Carlton Mills, Inc.
114 Fifth Avenue, New York, N. Y.

Dear Mr. Mandel:

Send me the Free Carlton Outfit by return mail — prepaid. I am ready to put The Carlton Line and your Big Money Earning guarantee to a test!

Name _____

Address _____

City _____ State _____

Carlton Carlton Quality, Style and Fit

carlton MILLS Inc.

114 FIFTH AVENUE ~ NEW YORK ~ N.Y.

Buy TODAY — the Modern Way

for Christmas Prepare NOW!

WHAT YOU DO—

SEND ONE DOLLAR with your name and address, the number of the article you wish to examine and a brief note telling us something about yourself.

Simply state: (1) How long at present address, (2) Age, (3) Married or single, (4) Name of employer, (5) Nature of work and (6) How long in employ.

This information will be held strictly confidential—no direct inquiries sent to employer.

WHAT WE DO—

Upon arrival of your order, we will open a Ten Month Charge Account and send your selection for approval and 10 day trial.

If price of article exceeds $50, we will ship C.O.D. the additional amount to be paid upon acceptance. If satisfied you pay balance in 10 equal monthly payments. Otherwise, return and full amount paid will be refunded.

No articles sold to persons under 20 years of age.

Choose NOW for Gifts or Yourself

$1.00 Brings Your Choice 10 MONTHS TO PAY

$57.50
S-40 AA1 blue-white diamond in Ladies' 18K white gold ring; butterfly design.
$1 with order, $3 to Postman, $5.35 a month.

$39.50
S-41 Open-work Bow-Knot design for Ladies in 18K white gold with AA1 blue-white diamond.
$1 with order, $3.85 a month.

It's a BULOVA Strap Watch
S-43 14K rolled gold-plate 15 jewel Bulova movement 'dust-tite' cap, Arabian numerals and hands.
$29.75. $1 with order. $2.87 a month.

$65
S-42 True Lover's Knot engagement ring; 18K white gold; blue-white diamond.
$1 with order, $4 to Postman. $6 a month.

$50
S-48 The Mayflower — beautifully carved in 14K white gold with AA1 blue-white diamond.
$1 with order, $4.90 a month.

$72.50
S-47 Two blue-white diamonds and diamonds in shank of 18K white gold ring. Large blue-white diamond in center.
Send $1 — pay Postman $6.25 $6.54 monthly.

$45
S-46 Engagement ring with motif of Love Birds, carved in 18K white gold; AA1 blue-white diamond.
$1 with order, $4.40 a month.

Strap Watch For MEN
S-49 14K green gold-filled engraved, guaranteed 15 jewel movement, radium numerals and hands.
$27.50—$1 with order, $2.65 a month.

Ideal Gifts for "HER"

S-44 Two blue white diamonds and four blue sapphires in thin 14K solid white gold engraved wrist watch for ladies. Guaranteed 15 Jewel movement.
$39.50—$1 with order, $3.85 a month.

S-45 Four blue-white diamonds and four blue sapphires in 14K solid white gold hand-engraved wrist watch complete with silk grosgrain ribbon and flexible expansion bracelet. Guaranteed 15 Jewel movement.
$45.00—$1 with order, $4.40 a month.

S-51 14K solid white gold wrist watch; guaranteed 15 Jewel movement. Silk grosgrain ribbon and expansion bracelet.
$27.50—$1 with order, $2.65 a month.

$37.50 — $1 with order, $3.65 a month.

$39.50—$1 with order, $3.85 a month.

$18.50 — $1 with order, $1.75 a month.

$32.50—$1 with order, $3.15 a month.

1928 Edition of Masterpiece of the Jeweler's Art

$32.50—$1 with order, $3.15 a month.

Complete with Presentation Case **$45**

A pleasing contrast of Diamonds and Sapphires

Complete with Presentation Case **$27.50**

An Ideal Gift Combination

L. W. SWEET, Inc.

Dept 127-S, 1660 Broadway, New York